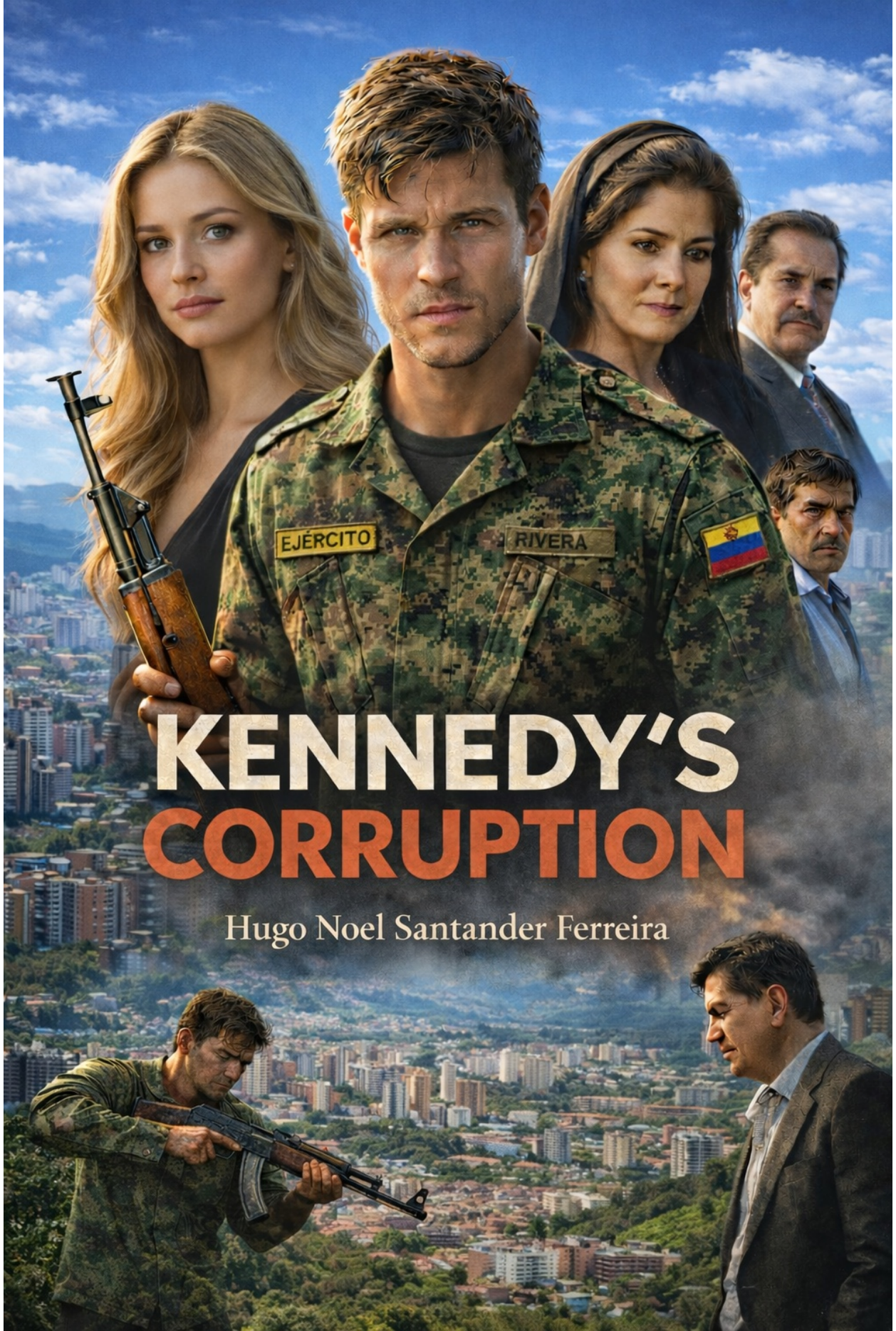
EJÉRCITO
RIVERA
KENNEDY'S
CORRUPTION
Hugo Noel Santander Ferreira

Hugo Noël Santander Ferreira

Kennedy's Corruption

A Stage Play

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It is not a bad thing to want to rise… The old Tromtra was also a poor weaver, and now he has twelve castles.

— Gerhart Hauptmann

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PROLOGUE – THE VISIBLE FORM OF DECAY

Kennedy's Corruption, by Hugo Noël Santander Ferreira, is a work that intercepts the reader: it seizes, questions, accuses, and, perhaps, liberates. From its opening pages it establishes a productive unease that distinguishes necessary theatre from that which merely entertains.

The action unfolds at Vidriovencol Limitada, a glass and aluminum company in Bucaramanga. The choice is not accidental: where transparency is the product, opacity is daily practice. Santander Ferreira turns this contradiction into a dramaturgical principle.

The characters fabricate surfaces that allow one to see through, while building their lives upon systematic concealment. The frontal light that eliminates shadows, the translucent panels, and the geometric precision of the stage are not mere décor: they constitute a scenic proposition about visibility as a form of violence.

Within this microcosm converge class tensions, economic interest, and the ethical degradation of a society in which corruption has ceased to be an anomaly and has become a norm, a language, and a condition of existence.

Marino is, without doubt, one of the play's greatest achievements: a coherent cynic who has elevated corruption into philosophy. He does not deceive out of weakness, but because he genuinely believes that deception is the principle that organizes the world. Porcia Bolaños embodies the hypocrisy of an elite that victimizes

itself while negotiating with the mechanisms that sustain it. Humberto and Aminta inhabit the most painful gray zone: that of those who yield little by little, until they forget when they stopped resisting. And Kennedy, the tragic core of the piece, is the young man who fails to learn the grammar of simulation. His sensitivity and his search for coherence render him incompatible with the system. He is not destroyed by his vices, but by his misdirected virtues.

One of Santander Ferreira's greatest merits is to show how corruption invades language itself. Words cease to name in order to conceal; legal, political, and familial discourse becomes contaminated until it is indistinguishable from manipulation. The lyrical moments—poems, ballads, verse monologues—do not soften the harshness: they introduce a critical distance that compels the audience to think while feeling.

The play enters into dialogue with Shakespeare, Brecht, and Miller, yet possesses a voice that is profoundly Colombian. It does not narrate the fall of an individual, but the exposure of a system in which we all participate. Here, hubris is collective, and punishment does not redeem: it is distributed.

The Corruption of Kennedy offers no consolation and no easy answers. It poses an uncomfortable and radical question: is it possible to withdraw from a social order in which corruption is the organizing principle of collective life. Its dramaturgy suggests that implication is almost inevitable.

The shattered glass with which the play concludes is not merely a powerful image: it is a philosophical proposition. That which was meant to allow clear vision fractures into pieces. Transparency, as a promise, is revealed to be illusory; its cost, human.

In a tour de force that has not yet been sufficiently addressed by critics, Hugo adapted and brought his work to the screen in 2012 under the title *The Crimes of Kennedy*. Later, with the rise of artificial intelligence, he remastered text and scenes into a disturbing film available on social media: *Colombia Corrupta*.

This is not theatre that pleases. It is theatre that demands. Read this work without seeking heroes or redemption. Allow yourselves discomfort. Allow yourselves to suspect that the characters who inhabit these pages are not entirely foreign to you. Because only by confronting, without anesthesia, the visible form of our own corruption may we one day aspire to something different.

Leyla Margarita Tobías Buelvas
Sincelejo, April 10, 2026

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wrote the first version of *The Crimes of Kennedy* in Porto, after a dream in which I saw public employees begging for favors. It was the year 1998, and the Colombian economy was faltering. As in every process of crisis, journalists issued judgments against the laxity and corruption of their rulers. I asked myself then—following the tautologies that so abounded, and still abound, in the history of Colombian journalism—what was the purpose of blaming our corrupt senators.

We were growing, indeed, in a country accustomed to political favors, where each transaction seemed to anticipate a secret bonus, and each appointment—often inadequate—functioned as payment for electoral proselytism. I recall having met a university professor who, while teaching a course on Kantian philosophy, boasted of having run over a car in order to later claim compensation.

The cult of cunning was celebrated—and is still celebrated—on comedy programs, often at the expense of minorities. "Accuse everyone of being rogues so that no one blames you for your bribes," was a phrase I frequently heard in reference to certain public leaders. I also remember the case of the wife of an investigated politician, who wrote a monologue about her loneliness during her husband's electoral campaign, omitting any reference to the embezzlements attributed to him.

The first readers of this work were my Portuguese students, who did not conceal their bewilderment at the portrait of corruption presented in it. Months later, I sent a copy to Ricardo Camacho, director of Teatro Libre in Bogotá, who highlighted the rhythm of the piece and

suggested revising certain passages he considered excessive.

The names of the characters refer to readings that have accompanied me: Aminta is inspired by Molière, and Porcia by Shakespeare. However, the work does not intend to allude to specific individuals, but to a shared experience. In Colombia, at least in my perception, there is no impulse to sweep under the rug that which is uncomfortable.

HNS

CHRACTERS

HUMBERTO, worker
AMINTA, secretary
MARINO, lawyer
KENNEDY, young man
PORCIA BOLAÑOS, businesswoman
ELIANA BOLAÑOS, her daughter
DANIELA, bureaucrat
ENRIQUETA, bureaucrat
DOCTOR ARDILA, businessman
FABIOLA, client
LORENA, embezzler

Cue 42:
EntrancsiExit
VIDRIOVENCOL
SET - FILES
VIDRIOVENCOL
SET - FILES
CABLES - AUDIO

ACT I

SCENE 1 - AMINTA, HUMBERTO

Office of "Vidriovencol Limitada." The space is constructed from modular panels that define an administrative office in the foreground and suggest, in the background, the production floor. The structure is visible; frames, joints, and supports are not concealed but presented with technical precision. Translucent surfaces—frosted glass and acrylic—are clean, continuous, unmarked, deliberately revealing artifice as a controlled system.

The stage is composed of three main panels. Two lateral panels, opaque, with uniform surfaces in industrial beige tones, define the office with geometric precision. The rear panel is composed of sections of frosted glass and translucent acrylic framed in polished aluminum. Through them, the production floor appears as a sequence of sharp silhouettes and rhythmic movements. Occasionally, flashes of light—simulations of metal cutting—cross the panel with pinpoint accuracy.

The lighting is fully theatrical and follows a principle of total exposure. A frontal system of neutral white light, approximately 5600K, composed of front-of-house and stage bridge spotlights, bathes the entire office evenly, eliminating any shadow on faces or objects. The incidence is cross-lit, forty-five degrees from left and right, allowing volume without generating dramatic contrast.

A low frontal fill removes any residual shadow in eyes and chin, ensuring constant legibility from any point

in the auditorium. A soft, diffused overhead light adds general volume without introducing expressive direction.

The background—translucent panels—receives independent lighting, slightly lower in intensity, through wide, diffused sources that maintain spatial separation without competing with the foreground. The silhouettes of the factory are perceived with controlled clarity, without dramatization.

Machine flashes are integrated through cold, punctual light sources, brief and exact, without dispersion or dominance. No backlighting or shadow zones are used. Light does not interpret: it exposes.

To the right, a laminated wood desk occupies a dominant position. Its surface is organized with precision: a landline telephone with simple lines, a metallic stapler aligned, a cup with pencils and ballpoint pens sorted, a fully operational typewriter, and a personal container discreetly placed. Each object is clean, separated, and aligned according to a constant logic. Under the desk, wiring is channeled and contained.

Three chairs surround it: two metal chairs with intact plastic seats, and a third intended for visitors. All are aligned with the desk's axis.

On the rear panel, centered with exactness, hangs an enlarged photograph of an ultra-conservative leader. The frame, polished, shows no alteration. Behind it, a national flag integrates with chromatic balance without disrupting the composition.

At center stage, a second, narrower desk functions as an auxiliary station. On it rest another typewriter, sheets arranged in perfectly parallel stacks, a rubber stamp, and its ink pad. Repetition does not create accumulation, but structure.

To the left, an auxiliary table organizes the break area: cups with intact surfaces, teaspoons arranged in series, napkins folded with precision, and a metallic coffee maker with uniform finish emitting steam in a constant, controlled column. Beneath the table, a shelf with labeled drawers; beside it, a closed accounting cabinet with folders organized according to a visible system.

The floor is completely clear. No object interrupts the continuity of the plane.

Entrances are clearly defined. To the left, an opening leads to Doña Porcia's office and the street; at the back, a door integrated into the translucent panels suggests access to the workshop. Both maintain the same material quality as the rest of the space.

Sound is constant and structured. From the background, presses, drills, and saws are heard as a regular pulse, without abrupt variation, integrated into the overall rhythm.

AMINTA, a slender woman of about thirty-five, sits behind the desk. She dresses with precision: a fitted blouse in a light tone, smooth surface; a long red skirt with continuous fall; discreet stockings; sober heels. Her hair, gathered with exactness, reinforces an image of control. Her hands, well kept, move with regularity across the typewriter.

AMINTA types small notes transcribed from documents placed on the desk. Each sheet is handled with economy of gesture and returned to its exact position.

HUMBERTO, a forty-year-old man, still attractive, enters from the left. He wears a supervisor's uniform of clean cut: structured jacket, light shirt buttoned with rigor, straight-line technical trousers, polished boots. His presence follows the same logic of precision as the environment.

The entire scenic composition must produce an unequivocal impression: there is no deterioration, no accumulation, no chance. Every element responds to a logic of alignment, repetition, and control. There is no ostentation: there is exactness.

HUMBERTO. — And the old woman?

AMINTA. — She had to go with Eliana to the Country Club. She may return at any moment.

HUMBERTO. — Don't tell me.

AMINTA. — I dislike seeing you like this, loitering in my office.

HUMBERTO. — It smells like lavender.

AMINTA. — It's the new detergent. (Pause.) Is it true that Don Marino has AIDS?

HUMBERTO. — All kinds of infamies are said about him.

AMINTA. — He manufactures them himself. Didn't he tell us he was reputed to be the best endowed in the city?

HUMBERTO. — Precisely. He has better connections than any of us; councilmen and senators' sons.

AMINTA. — If that were so, he wouldn't be here.

(Humberto takes out a small key and, opening the cabinet, pulls out a black bag and a cup with sugar. As he speaks, he prepares and pours himself a coffee.)

AMINTA. — How is your firstborn?

HUMBERTO. — Worried. He spent the night awake.

AMINTA. — Ah… (Pause.) Are they taking him into the army?

(Humberto notices a copy of the local newspaper on the floor; he picks it up and reads it absently.)

AMINTA. — I asked if they are taking your son into the army.

HUMBERTO. — Most likely. There he will learn to behave like a man.

AMINTA. — He is your son, Humberto.

HUMBERTO. — It's time he stands on his own. His mother spoils him: she does his schoolwork.

AMINTA. — I would do it too. If my son were to become President of the Republic, I would write his speeches myself.

(Pause.)

HUMBERTO. — Really?

(Pause.)

AMINTA. — Have you already spoken with Don Marino?

HUMBERTO. — You give too much importance to Don Marino. He is nothing more than a shyster who lost his license after allegedly defending a poor man named Flavio, who had been swindled by a famous corporation called Allianz. The video was made by the renowned reggaeton singer Good Bat, and it is viral across all internet channels.

(Humberto takes out his cellphone and shows Aminta the video, which is projected onto the back of the stage.)

MALE SINGER
This is the ballad of Don Flavio,
who always trusted in his word.
He believed in insurance and in its promise,
yet today his story gives us certainty.

Don Flavio trusted in the promise,
he signed his life in precise script;
he paid each installment in silence,
he kept his faith as one who warns.

When the time of his retirement came,
he asked for what was just, clear, and due;
yet the answer twisted the course:
"what was agreed does not apply."

And when he claimed his rightful pension,

he received instead open betrayal;
"two million will be delivered,
for the returns were low."

That clumsy and vile deception
leads him carefully to a lawyer;
Marino Pérez takes the case
and files the action before the State.

After a long year of tense struggle,
six million would be the amount;
Flavio receives the diminished ruling,
and in his conscience remains aggrieved.

Allianz already had well positioned
its connections within the courts;
the institution that protects the client
responds to the underlying pact.

The entire trial already arranged,
is set in hearing;
Flavio declares he will appeal,
yet the process would be twisted.

But in the hearing, once underway,
Marino Pérez leaves the courtroom;
he withdraws the force of the defense,
and the procedure yields without resistance.

According to the rule that sustained it,
the pending action concerned him;
Marino Pérez signs and departs,
and the case loses all consistency.

Another lawyer enters the scene,
with new management that barely orders;
yet the court issues its response:
the appeal is no longer admissible.

"Not admitted," it is stated,
"the one who filed it has withdrawn;
the error was to have entrusted
an act that has now been annulled."

And with the deadline already expired,
all rights collapse;
the law becomes pure business,
and the court confirms its idleness.

The rules turn like a mechanism,
in service of a dark arrangement;
between agreements and deviations,
decisions are administered.

AMINTA. — I know that flat feet are no longer an excuse, but what are you going to do about it?

HUMBERTO. — Today we will take care of that matter.

AMINTA. — (trembling) Don't tell me Kennedy is coming to visit us.

HUMBERTO. — Do you remember Edelmiro?

AMINTA. — It rings a bell. The one we fired for falsifying a cafeteria receipt?

HUMBERTO. — "We fired"? You speak as if you owned this business. Anyway, Edelmiro went from messenger to bandit. Here he is, on the criminals' page.

AMINTA. — What did he do?

HUMBERTO. — Guess.

AMINTA. — Did he rob a bank?

HUMBERTO. — Killed in combat against the army. (Pause.)

AMINTA. — May he rest in peace.

HUMBERTO. — I would like to emigrate to the United States.

AMINTA. — Why not Japan?

HUMBERTO. — Japan?

AMINTA. — You would have better opportunities there. Or why not Honduras? At least there you would have no problem with the language.

HUMBERTO. — People who travel to Central America come back disappointed; all honest jobs are already taken; nowadays only rogues prosper. There is no place like Bucaramanga.

(Humberto approaches Aminta and takes her by the waist. Aminta tries to pull away; the resistance is not complete. The proximity is sustained for an instant.

The sound of a door opening is heard.
Both separate immediately and regain their composure with precision.)

SCENE 2 - AMINTA, HUMBERTO, MARINO

Marino enters the office, his hands gripping a heavy snakeskin briefcase; he is a middle-aged man whose presence immediately organizes the space.

His hair, completely white, is combed back with uniform precision. Every strand participates in a continuous surface, fixed with technical care.

His face is angular, with firm lines. The cheekbones stand out clearly; the skin retains tension. A thick mustache, equally white, is trimmed with exactness and defines the central area of the face.

His gaze is lateral and evaluative. He observes before intervening. His eyes register, compare, and decide.

He wears a dark suit of precise cut, fitted to measure. The black shirt establishes a uniform base; the red tie introduces a point of chromatic concentration, direct and dominant.

The jacket remains closed. The body remains contained. The hands stay close to the body axis or rest

in the pockets, within a constant economy of gesture.

His posture is upright, stable, without rigidity. Every movement responds to a defined intention.

The smile appears as a controlled mechanism, brief, administered.

As a whole, MARINO presents himself as a figure of structured dominance: each element—clothing, gesture, gaze—responds to a logic of precision and control.

MARINO. — Has anyone asked for me?

AMINTA. — No one, Don Marino. It is only seven thirty.

MARINO. — I am going to use your desk.

AMINTA. — Yours is available.

MARINO. — This one is more comfortable; you have everything I need within reach.

AMINTA. — (cold) As long as you do not smoke...

(Marino settles beside the desk. As he speaks, he organizes his documents.)

MARINO. — I gave up that vice long ago. It was a promise I made to my granddaughter before her death.

AMINTA. — What did she die of?

MARINO. — Pulmonary emphysema.

AMINTA. — My God.

MARINO. — (laughing) I am not serious; the truth is tragic, so tragic that I always joke about it.

AMINTA. — You do not have to tell me.

MARINO. — A stray bullet pierced her little heart on the day our national soccer team tied with the Germans in Italy.

AMINTA. — At least you have a little angel in heaven.

MARINO. — I still do not know whether the idea was hers or her mother's. Yes; little Tatiana persuaded me with her pouting. And to think Carmen never convinced me in almost fifty years together.

AMINTA. — You married young, Don Marino.

MARINO. — At fifteen, my dear.

HUMBERTO. — (to Aminta) Do not flirt with Don Marino, Aminta. Doña Carmen is a jealous woman.

(Aminta laughs.)

MARINO. — (to Humberto) And what are you doing outside the workshop? I do not even want to

imagine Doña Porcia's expression when she finds you raiding her coffee instead of working.

(Humberto brings a cup of coffee to Marino.)

HUMBERTO. — She can only fire me, like so many of her employees.

(Marino receives the cup.)

MARINO. — I do not think she will. You are a diligent employee, Humberto.

HUMBERTO. — If you say so.

MARINO. — A father who has known how to raise his children.

HUMBERTO. — Thank you.

MARINO. — If Doña Porcia were to suffer a heart attack right now, Eliana would inherit, and you, thanks to your son, would supervise her business.

HUMBERTO. — (perplexed) What you are saying is… perverse.

MARINO. — If it is perverse to say what suits you...

AMINTA. — (to Marino) Do you mean that Eliana and Kennedy...?

MARINO. — I saw them myself at the doors of

Los Cinco Sentidos.

HUMBERTO. — I wonder what you were doing at that motel.

MARINO. — (observing Aminta) What all men and women who go there do.

AMINTA. — (quickly) She will make him suffer. That girl does not love him; she is infatuated.

MARINO. — How do you know?

(Aminta types.)

AMINTA. — Kennedy has the disposition to endure her. She is daring, impertinent, and disrespectful.

MARINO. — She is your employer's daughter, and also her confidante, as I see it.

AMINTA. — There are those who confuse friendship with kindness.

MARINO. — (to Humberto) Do not be ashamed, Humberto. All workers take pride in Kennedy. They feel that their work benefits one of their own. Los Cinco Sentidos is an expensive place. I too, in my youth, fell in love with a girl of high standing.

HUMBERTO. — Really?

MARINO. — A tragedy. Society placed her beyond my reach. But I do not regret it. Eliana is a

promising young lady; she speaks English and French, and studies Mandarin. But we are not of her class.

AMINTA. — Perhaps in time Eliana will be as famous as Senator Goncourt.

MARINO. — God forbid.

AMINTA. — You dislike everyone.

MARINO. — That woman has made herself famous at our expense, Aminta. Tell me, what has the senator done for this country?

AMINTA. — She has denounced our corruption.

MARINO. — To whom? She goes abroad and publishes a book in France, in French, in which Europeans discover the Colombia they have always dreamed of: a hybrid between Che Guevara's diaries and García Márquez's narratives; a banana republic of rich and poor, of illiterates and tyrants, of butchers and lambs, and above all of credulous people. They need her more there than here: not as a politician, but as a narrative.

AMINTA. — And is it not so?

MARINO. — No.

AMINTA. — Do you not complain about the corruption of our leaders?

MARINO. — And are there no corrupt leaders in

France? In the United States? In England? It is true that there is corruption in Colombia, but it does not arise from our ignorance, but from the political organization of the wealthiest states in the world, which allows a few to deposit the fruits of their misdeeds into bank accounts with the secret complicity of some industrialized country. According to Senator Goncourt, what we should do is travel to France, study at a university, and return to govern those who would otherwise never outgrow their infancy. She would do better to remain in Europe, where she is now admired as the new heroine of us, poor third-world illiterates, helpless and mentally deficient.

AMINTA. — You exaggerate.

MARINO. — No. Senator Goncourt condemned herself by assuring Europeans that we would elect her president this year. The optimist has been forced to launch her candidacy. If she does not, the French will take her for a liar.

HUMBERTO. — She will not win.

MARINO. — Exactly. She will be the laughingstock of the year. No one doubts, not even she herself, that with barely two percent of the adult electorate, Senator Goncourt will suffer a humiliating defeat. So do not contradict me, Aminta.

AMINTA. — (ironic) You are absolutely right, Don Marino. Next time I will be mute, and all ears, like that divan.

MARINO. — Now you mock me.

(Aminta looks at him in silence. Pause.)

HUMBERTO. — I wanted to speak with you, Don Marino.

MARINO. — Yes?

HUMBERTO. — The militia wants to take Kennedy to the barracks.

MARINO. — I already told you there was no reason to worry. As a high school graduate, your son will receive preferential treatment.

HUMBERTO. — The situation is getting worse. The insurgency has mined a third of this country. Just read the newspapers. Did you hear about Edelmiro's death?

MARINO. — Ah, yes.

HUMBERTO. — If Doña Porcia had not fired him.

MARINO. — He died in his trade. (To Aminta.) Have you prepared the books?

(Aminta stops typing.)

AMINTA. — Since Monday.

MARINO. — Could you review them? A single

error would harm us.

AMINTA. — I reviewed them several times.

HUMBERTO. — We would like to speak alone for a moment, Aminta.

(Aminta stands and exits.)

AMINTA. — Why so many ambiguities, Don Marino? I can smell your private dealings better than anyone.

MARINO. — Thank you, my dear.

(Aminta exits.)

SCENE 3 - HUMBERTO, MARINO

(Marino stands.)

MARINO. — You already know that my brother-in-law's cousin can get Kennedy out of such trouble.

HUMBERTO. — How much?

MARINO. — Ten salaries. It is authentic. I do not deal with forgers.

HUMBERTO. — You know I barely earn more than minimum wage, Don Marino.

MARINO. — For five minimum salaries I can recommend Kennedy for a position in the major's office; they will not send him to mined fields or reconnaissance campaigns.

(Humberto laughs nervously.)

HUMBERTO. — I do not want to see him carrying blankets for his superiors either.

MARINO. — (smiles) I will be honest with you, Humberto. This cousin offers me a commission for each military card. You are a hardworking man, and I will not be so inhuman as to allow your son to sacrifice himself on a battlefield. I will process his military card for three salaries.

HUMBERTO. — I cannot.

MARINO. — You offend me, Humberto. I am not a beggar. I also have needs.

HUMBERTO. — (dejected) Forgive me, Don Marino. I do not have that money. I do not dispute your commission; it is fair. If you help me now, I will pay you in December, when I receive my bonus.

MARINO. — No.

HUMBERTO. — Do you not know anyone else?

MARINO. — If you have no money, I see no solution, Humberto, unless…

HUMBERTO. — Tell me.

MARINO. — Kennedy were to get Eliana pregnant.

HUMBERTO. — That would be irresponsible.

MARINO. — On your part or his?

HUMBERTO. — I am incapable of suggesting it.

(Pause.)

MARINO. — Tell me, Humberto, does your wife work?

HUMBERTO. — At home.

MARINO. — It is a shame that you carry the responsibility for your three children on a single salary. Why do you not start your own business, with one or two partners?

HUMBERTO. — Who?

MARINO. — Aminta, for example. She is still an attractive woman, and she is unhappy in her marriage; I recently heard her say she wanted to divorce. Her husband is abusive. Unemployed, and have you seen the new truck he drives? Aminta gave it to him. If I were in your place, I would propose that she invest her money in an aluminum window business.

HUMBERTO. — Do you think so?

MARINO. — Your wife is aging. And Aminta, have you noticed the way she looks at you? Her hands tense every time you cross the threshold of this door. I still remember the times she called to ask about your health last year, when you had hepatitis. There was not a morning she did not keep us informed of your recovery. We had quite some fun with your disgust for spinach juice.

HUMBERTO. — Carrot.

MARINO. — So how could I not notice your infidelity?

HUMBERTO. — You talk too much, Don Marino. Forgive me for saying so.

MARINO. — Forgiven. I hope you will forgive me as well when I tell you that the accounting books of this company have been altered by you and Aminta.

HUMBERTO. — What?

MARINO. — An acceptable reaction: indignant and confused at the same time. But insufficient. You should have become angry, as when Doña Porcia accused you of breaking a glass sheet on purpose. Do not be ashamed, Humberto. No one is free of guilt. You see how Doña Porcia began, smuggling eggs from Venezuela. Destabilizing our country's economy.

HUMBERTO. — I have been an honest man, Don Marino.

MARINO. — We all are, although it is true that nowadays the only ones who go to prison are the credulous.

(Humberto, seized by sudden fury, grabs Marino by the lapel, raising his fist.)

HUMBERTO. — Who do you think you are? Manuel Gamarra, from Barbosa, my father, always told me he would rather see me under a tombstone than behind bars.

MARINO. — A tombstone that will be for Kennedy if you do not release me immediately.

(Humberto releases him and turns his back, subdued.)

MARINO. — Grab me again and I will see your daughter prostituting herself on Carrera Fifteen.

Scene 4 - Aminta, Humberto, Marino

(Aminta enters with two large books, which she hands to Don Marino.)

AMINTA. — The officials from the tax office are asking for you, Don Marino.

MARINO. — (dismissive) Officials!

(Marino takes his agenda, the books, and exits.)

Scene 5 - Aminta, Humberto

HUMBERTO. — And the old woman?

AMINTA. — She arrived with Eliana.

(Humberto rushes to put away the coffee and arrange the cups. Voices are heard from outside.)

Scene 6 - Aminta, Eliana, Humberto, Porcia

PORCIA. — (O.S.) Either she joins the training sessions with the dance instructor, or she comes to work with me in the afternoons.

ELIANA. — (O.S.) For God's sake, Mom! The university swim team needs me!

(Porcia enters just as Humberto finishes putting away the cups. Porcia is a middle-aged woman, upright, with total control of her body. Her presence imposes itself before she speaks. She is dressed with calculated elegance: a silk blouse with an animal print motif, satin finish, perfectly pressed, falling with precision over dark high-waisted trousers with a straight cut, fitted at the waist without rigidity. The fabric responds to light with a

contained sheen. She wears closed, discreet heels of classic form.

Her hair, black and tight, gathered into a perfectly aligned low ponytail, reveals an angular face, marked cheekbones, and a firm jaw. Her makeup is meticulous: even base, defined contour, lips in a sober yet dominant tone. She wears long earrings that follow the movement of her head with minimal oscillation.

Every gesture is measured: when she sits or moves, there is no superfluous noise or unnecessary friction. Her economy of movement is a sign of authority.

ELIANA enters behind her; a young university student, slender and still forming, with a contained energy that contrasts with Porcia's rigidity. She wears warm-season clothing: a light blouse, fine fabric, short-sleeved or rolled, in a light tone, slightly loose over the torso; trousers or skirt of light material, functional, allowing movement. The ensemble suggests comfort rather than ostentation, without neglect.

Her long, straight hair falls naturally over her shoulders with a healthy sheen. Her face, without noticeable makeup, shows soft, expressive features; her gaze is quick, reactive, sometimes evasive, sometimes direct. Her hands are occupied: she handles a small device with ease, changing its parts with technical familiarity.

She sits without ceremony, with youthful naturalness, occupying the space without asking

permission, without disrupting the order of the environment.)

PORCIA. — (without raising her voice; her presence alone imposes silence) No one is necessary anywhere. If the Pharisees dispensed with their Messiah, you can dispense with those fortune hunters.

ELIANA. — Fortune hunters?

PORCIA. — I refer to those bodybuilders who train you; they are tamed pigs. I have noticed their greedy looks.

ELIANA. — Raúl is a married man.

PORCIA. — From today on Eliana will once again honor us with her collaboration. (To Aminta.) I need you to account for the hours she works in this office. (To Humberto.) Have the workers already finished the bathroom partitions at the Girls' School?

HUMBERTO. — (hesitant) I think… yes.

AMINTA. — (handing Humberto the typed transcriptions) The boss is referring to the new section. You will excuse me, Doña Porcia, but Don Marino has kept me busy preparing for the visit of the tax office inspectors.

(Eliana sits to change the batteries of her device.)

PORCIA. — Last night I told you that the contract could not wait. Or do you think that the

daughters of the best families in Bucaramanga are going to bathe indecently?

AMINTA. — Don Marino—

PORCIA. — There is no saint that will do!

(Silence. Porcia looks at Humberto, who rushes toward the workshop.)

Scene 7 - Aminta, Eliana, Porcia

PORCIA. — You give too much importance to my assistant. Don Marino is nothing more than a subordinate. What time did the old lazy man arrive today?

AMINTA. — On time.

PORCIA. — Of course… Have you already arranged the appointment with Doctor Ardila?

AMINTA. — (nervous) His phone has been busy.

PORCIA. — Tell that story to someone else! Yesterday I was very clear about how to proceed with your returned checks.

(Pause.)

PORCIA. — What are you waiting for?

(Aminta searches for her phone book among her papers; her hands tremble.)

PORCIA. — Another morning I pay you for nothing. Hungry idlers! Thank God loans keep me afloat. And the government, in its corruption, enables them! I do not fire you because I do not want your husband to break that mare's jaw of yours again.

(Aminta cries uncontrollably.)

PORCIA. — That is it. Cry. That way people will believe I am an ogre.

(Porcia sighs impatiently and exits.)

Scene 8 - Aminta, Eliana

Eliana goes to the door. Her movement is agile; she barely places her hand on the frame, leans her face out without exposing her body, and returns with the same economy.

She sits, crosses one leg carelessly, and resumes the device without looking.

ELIANA. — She went to speak with the government agents.

(Aminta stops crying and drinks from her yogurt cup. Eliana offers her two pieces of gum.)

ELIANA. — Was that about the broken jaw serious?

AMINTA. — Whether true or not, she took pity on me and sent me on a two-week vacation to San Andrés.

ELIANA. — What a beast. This time ask her to send you to Santo Domingo. There are some gorillas there you would love.

AMINTA. — Have you been?

ELIANA. — A friend told me. She came back triply satisfied.

AMINTA. — I have a husband.

ELIANA. — At my age I cannot understand the mortifications of marriage. I am only living my erotic phase, as my philosophy professor would say. But perhaps with time I will grow tired of it as well.

(Eliana takes a calculator and performs some operations, writing them carefully on a sheet of paper.)

AMINTA. — Erotic phase? If your mother heard you.

ELIANA. — I would like to be a prostitute, you know? Like the woman in *Belle de Jour*. I have heard that several classmates are. It is poverty; the decadence of our wealthy class once it loses its wealth. (Writes.) Do not misunderstand me. Although men have touched me, I

am still a virgin… (Writes.) Not only out of devotion, but because I have not yet fallen in love. (Writes.) Let me see. One kilometer per week…

AMINTA. — (viperous) And Kennedy?

ELIANA. — (too quickly) It is quite a journey.

AMINTA. — I do not know what you are calculating, and I prefer not to know.

ELIANA. — Do not be suspicious. Twenty meters per minute.

(Aminta makes a phone call.)

AMINTA. — Those scenes give me headaches…

ELIANA. — Sixty meters per act.

AMINTA. — (on the phone) Doctor Ardila? Where have you been hiding? This is Miss Díaz from Vidriovencol Limitada. How are you? I am calling to inform you that your check has been returned… Doña Porcia would like to schedule an appointment with you, yes… on the next Secretary's Day, if possible. And do not forget my message… I will pass it along.

(Aminta hangs up. Eliana extends the paper, but Aminta ignores it.)

ELIANA. — May I know why you ask me about Kennedy? I do not live with him to keep track of his whereabouts.

AMINTA. — You have been seen with Kennedy in seedy hotels.

ELIANA. — Slander.

AMINTA. — I do not care what people say. Our parents were superstitious peasants, and it is obvious that between prudery and voluptuousness they prefer hypocrisy. But allow me to ask: do you use any contraceptive method?

ELIANA. — I am a virgin, I told you.

AMINTA. — Just what I feared.

ELIANA. — What are you implying?

AMINTA. — Kennedy is a candidate for the army front, and the best way for him to stay in the city is through a pregnancy.

ELIANA. — (mocking) You do not know him, Aminta.

AMINTA. — His father has no money to buy him a military card. Humberto himself told me.

ELIANA. — (caustic) I do not blame him. Humberto has always supported two women.

(Pause.)

AMINTA. — Kennedy is a good boy, but what he most desires is to leave his home.

ELIANA. — The army may help him. Perhaps they will send him to Sinai. He tells me that military quarters there are as luxurious as any hotel in Europe.

AMINTA. — Kennedy is a mythomaniac. In Sinai, English is a requirement. I know he barely obtained his high school diploma. Something he will not have told you, of course. If the army selects him, I know him capable of anything, even killing.

ELIANA. — Your bitterness drives me mad, Aminta. Is it because of your job as a secretary? You are not the only one who agonizes in this hole. My mother does not enjoy provoking this misery. You abuse your position. We should cut out the tongues of all the insidious ones by decree. The most regrettable thing is that I still esteem you. My private life is my business and mine alone. Do you understand?

(Aminta types.)

AMINTA. — Do not be angry, Eliana. You know how much I care for you. I only think of your well-being.

(Aminta looks at her fixedly.)

ELIANA. — Do not think you will earn my friendship that way. In any case, let us forget it; I am sure you have plenty of work to do.

SCENE 9 - AMINTA, DANIELA,

ELIANA, ENRIQUETA, MARINO, PORCIA

Doña Porcia enters with a document in her hands. She is followed by Marino, Enriqueta, and Daniela, government employees, with pale faces that proclaim their lineage; they wear blouses in shades of light blue and fuchsia, combined with dark skirts of sober cut. Their shoulders are covered with shawls of Middle Eastern or Indian inspiration, fine fabrics with a wide drape, arranged with ornamental care over their formal attire. Their throats, chained in gold, support two haughty heads beneath masses of hair, lacquer, and dye. Their complexions, lightly coated with cosmetics, seem punctured by heavy emerald earrings laboriously set into prematurely tightened ears. Enriqueta's rodent-like eyes and solid cheekbones stand out over Daniela's inflamed pupils and fresh complexion.

Enriqueta holds her body with compact firmness, without slackness. Her broad, structured face projects slightly forward, as if each gesture were pre-calculated. Her hair, fixed with lacquer, forms a rigid, continuous surface. Her blouse, of denser fabric, maintains a closed structure; the shawl, symmetrically arranged, barely shifts as she walks. The skirt falls in a straight line. Her movements are brief and contained.

Daniela, in contrast, presents a more vertical and refined figure. Her face, with cleaner lines, retains a cared-for smoothness that accentuates the liveliness of her expression. Her pupils scan the space with constant attention. Her hair, gathered with precision, leaves the face clear. Her blouse, of lighter fabric, adapts with greater flexibility; the shawl introduces slight variation in its fall, generating small displacements with each movement. Her

hands move quickly over the documents; her movement is direct.

Both maintain rigorous neatness: their garments are clean, without wrinkles or wear. Color does not introduce disorder, but visual hierarchy within the ensemble.

PORCIA. — (coarse) Greet Daniela and Enriqueta. (honeyed) This is the office that mediates with the workers. Aminta, my secretary; and this is Eliana, my only daughter.

ELIANA. — Are you the officials from the tax office?

ENRIQUETA. — (ignoring her) What a charming girl; what delightful eyes. (to Porcia) Does she come to work with you?

PORCIA. — During the holidays. Eliana has a business temperament.

ENRIQUETA. — Such dedication. My husband has a travel agency, but not even by force can we get our daughters to help us. (noticing the device) What are you listening to?

ELIANA. — Classics.

ENRIQUETA. — The best for falling asleep.

PORCIA. — Although Eliana sleeps little.

ENRIQUETA. — Do not tell me…

PORCIA. — Business runs in her blood. My daughter helps me quote minor sales. She is one of the favorite students of the mathematics professor.

(Enriqueta takes the sheet of paper on which Eliana made her calculations.)

ENRIQUETA. — And what do we have here? The calculations of a recent sale?

AMINTA. — (sardonic) If people paid in kilometers.

ENRIQUETA. — One thousand per week…

DANIELA. — (to Porcia) Could the citizen show us the income ledger?

MARINO. — Here it is, ma'am.

(Marino steps forward and places it open on the desk. Daniela flips through it. Enriqueta observes the office with the severe gaze of a poorly paid public employee.)

DANIELA. — I am neither ma'am, nor yours. Miss.

MARINO. — Miss, excuse me. At my age, the eyes deceive.

DANIELA. — I would prefer you address me as Doctor Contreras, if the citizen does not mind.

MARINO. — (smoothly) Did the doctor study economics?

DANIELA. — And what do you think?

MARINO. — If I may be honest, no.

(Eliana laughs.)

DANIELA. — Impertinent. Do you think our government employs illiterate people?

MARINO. — If I may be honest, yes.

(Eliana laughs.)

DANIELA. — We shall see where your jokes take you, if I may be equally honest.

MARINO. — Excuse me—

DANIELA. — Save your excuses. Meanwhile, as a servant of the nation, I demand that you address me by my title. (to Porcia) I see your company has suffered losses over the past six months.

MARINO. — Unfortunately. Precisely since the beginning of the new fiscal year.

PORCIA. — With the desertification of the United States, the real estate business has collapsed. The culprits are the congressmen, with trade liberalization. And all medicinal products are imported from Ecuador. My God. Who would believe that we once had fourteen

employees and now only ten remain?

ENRIQUETA. — In that case, you will have to close the business by the end of the month.

(Silence. Porcia moves calmly amid general astonishment. Daniela continues examining the ledger.)

PORCIA. — It is true. My enemies have driven me to the brink of a nervous breakdown. Yesterday, for example, we lost a substantial contract. I quoted the job at fifty salaries, and SOTRACOL offered to complete it for forty. It is money laundering. I am an honest woman, still afloat with dignity in this sea of pirates and sharks. I have rejected every fashionable scheme: illicit exports to Argentina, contracts with the deceased, trafficking in liquor and weapons, purchasing coca plantations in the Amazon, buying votes and influence with congressmen. But SOTRACOL has embraced them all with impunity.

MARINO. — (alarmed) Doña Porcia, you have no proof.

PORCIA. — What proof is needed beyond sales below production cost?

(Porcia bursts into sobbing. Marino offers his handkerchief.)

DANIELA. — The citizen may file a claim to protect her interests. I can recommend her to the prosecutor right now, if she wishes.

PORCIA. — No, thank you. Another day,

perhaps.

DANIELA. — We regret the state of your finances, Doña Porcia, but the national government requires liquidity. We live under a state of emergency.

PORCIA. — Do not remind me. I also watch the news. Our boys need better weapons. In the fight against terrorist groups, I would be the first to donate the necessary money to eradicate the evil.

ENRIQUETA. — In that case, a donation of fifteen salaries would be most appropriate for this fiscal year.

PORCIA. — Fifteen?

DANIELA. — Or, if the citizen prefers, I will draft a report on the state of your company's accounting. If everything is in order, you will have nothing to fear. But a single error on a simple invoice will be enough for the Republic to sanction you with fifty minimum salaries.

(Porcia collapses into the nearest chair, breathing with difficulty.)

ENRIQUETA. — Or, more regrettably, for a judge to convict you of illicit enrichment.

MARINO. — (whispering) We must speak.

PORCIA. — Excuse me; this office suffocates me.

(Porcia moves to the proscenium. Marino follows her. Porcia gradually recovers her composure during this brief exchange. The others remain in place, observing.)

SCENE 10 - MARINO, PORCIA

PORCIA. — How much would the fines amount to?

MARINO. — Forty or fifty salaries, if we take the legal route; if we proceed with hypocrisy, we would have to compensate the public employees with a reasonable arrangement.

PORCIA. — With hypocrisy?

MARINO. — I mean under the table; that is our colloquial expression. But hypocrisy is more appropriate; in Greek, hypo means under. Hippopotamus translates as river horse. And crisis conveys judgment. Under judgment.

PORCIA. — You are quite the encyclopedia, Don Marino. What do you advise?

MARINO. — The best course would be to pay that fine, and not satisfy the arrogance of these fools.

PORCIA. — Those extra salaries hurt. Could we bargain?

MARINO. — If you leave me alone with

Enriqueta. I do not trust the other one.

PORCIA. — Try to have us exempted for two years.

(Porcia regains the pallor of her cheeks.)

SCENE 11 – AMINTA, DANIELA, ELIANA, ENRIQUETA, MARINO, PORCIA

PORCIA. — (to Aminta) Were you able to contact Doctor Ardila?

AMINTA. — He should arrive at any moment. He seemed eager to see you. You know how sharp he can be at times.

PORCIA. — Eliana, Aminta, accompany me to the office. Don Marino has pending matters with Doctor Zea.

DANIELA. — And with me.

MARINO. — Of course. With the miss and Doctor Contreras.

(Eliana, Porcia, and Aminta exit.)

SCENE 12 – DANIELA, ENRIQUETA, MARINO

ENRIQUETA. — What did they decide?

MARINO. — Ten salaries. Five for the government, five for you.

(Daniela laughs.)

DANIELA. — Who do you think we are?

ENRIQUETA. — We offer you an honorable way out, both for your legal and natural standing. We will settle for thirty salaries.

DANIELA. — We are not beggars.

MARINO. — Let us be frank for once. I do not care whether you ruin us or not. The salary I earn here is a misery. Yours is too. So listen carefully. I can secure thirty salaries if you are willing to pay me a substantial commission for my efforts.

ENRIQUETA. — And how much would that be?

MARINO. — Ten salaries.

DANIELA. — We do not deal with third parties.

(Daniela takes her documents. Enriqueta grabs her arm.)

ENRIQUETA. — I do not believe his mediation is worthless. The owner might take offense, and in that case neither of us would obtain any benefit. All the money would go to the government.

DANIELA. — The shamelessness of our politicians disgusts me, but the owner of this company does not lament, she exaggerates. I will teach her a proper lesson.

ENRIQUETA. — You are single, but I have three daughters to feed. In the current conditions, no salary is enough; one must make do.

DANIELA. — Poor is the one who desires more than he has.

ENRIQUETA. — Be sensible, Daniela. It is twenty salaries. Would you waste them just to see a stranger suffer?

DANIELA. — That woman's crocodile tears do not move me.

ENRIQUETA. — Nor me, nor anyone, but at this moment we must deal with her.

DANIELA. — In that case let us divide the bribe between the two of us. We will both certify that this company's accounts are correct.

ENRIQUETA. — They will send another inspector.

DANIELA. — In one or two months. It is not certain; besides, that will no longer be our problem. We can always claim we made a miscalculation.

ENRIQUETA. — You forget the accountant's commission…

DANIELA. — Accountant. I will take care of instructing him.

SCENE 13 – AMINTA, DANIELA, ELIANA, ENRIQUETA, MARINO, PORCIA

Kennedy enters; a tall young man, his growth still unbalanced: slightly slouched shoulders, long limbs that do not fully coordinate with the torso. His figure oscillates between rigidity and lack of control. His face, structurally symmetrical, is marked by active acne that interrupts the continuity of the skin and accentuates his age.

His dark hair falls without deliberate arrangement, with strands invading the forehead. His gaze is frontal, defiant, sustained more by impulse than by calculation. His eyes do not avoid conflict; they seek it.

He wears clean but informal clothing: a fuchsia T-shirt or light shirt of everyday use, slightly fitted to the torso; drill trousers from the 1990s, well worn but without pretension. The footwear is new, an imitation of a glamorous brand. There is no disorder: there is youthful carelessness within a functional frame.

His way of occupying space is invasive: he sits without permission, leans forward when speaking, exposes his body as if each gesture were a position. At rest, his hands seek contact with his own body or nearby objects.

DANIELA. — (loudly) My colleague and I have reached an agreement. We want thirty salaries between the two of us; your commission will be all the additional money you obtain from Doña Porcia, regardless of the amount.

MARINO. — Very appropriate. But I cannot receive commissions; I am only an administrator. Kennedy, could you wait outside for a few seconds? I have important matters to attend to.

(Kennedy sits in front of the desk, challenging Marino with his gaze. Marino, visibly annoyed, leaves the office followed by Enriqueta and Daniela.)

MARINO. — (V.O.) These young people today have particular manners. We will go to the cafeteria.

(Daniela slides her pupils sourly from Kennedy's head to his worn and hollow shoes, pursing her lips in disdain. Kennedy, in response, rests his hands on his genitals.)

KENNEDY. — (lewd) What are you looking for?

(Daniela examines all the objects around her, both attracting and avoiding his insistent gaze, until she

exits after Marino and Enriqueta.)

SCENE 14 – KENNEDY

Kennedy looks at the yogurt cup on the desk; looks at the door; stands, takes the cup, and brings it to his lips.

SCENE 15 – AMINTA, KENNEDY

(Aminta enters quickly and lets out a brief muffled cry.
Kennedy reacts clumsily and spills part of the contents of the cup onto the desk.
Aminta laughs.
Kennedy blushes in embarrassment and prepares to leave, wiping his hands on his clothes.
Aminta speaks while taking a red cloth from her desk and, approaching Kennedy, dries the yogurt stains on his clothes.
A sheet of paper falls to the floor.
Aminta picks it up and examines it.)

AMINTA. — What is this?

KENNEDY. — Nothing.

AMINTA. — (reading)
Is it a letter?

KENNEDY. — A poem.

AMINTA
Where do you come from, Father?
You have never revealed your secrets to me;
Before, you held me in the air
So I would not fall shattered upon the dust;

Before, I held you in fear
Of slipping helplessly from the mechanical wheels:
The city was dark, wavering, and produced vertigo;
Your powerful arms would gather me up
Swiftly from the dust,
When no one else defended me anymore:
The street boys struck me with their blows.

Far away, always far away, those arms fled,
Abandoning me at the mercy of these currents.
I blame the years that weaken you;
I blame this strength of mine, which I possess and do not desire.

How long did it take you to write it?

KENNEDY. — One morning. Do you like it?

AMINTA. — (nervous; trying to ease the discomfort) Humberto has been very worried about your military situation. Soldiers are the sons of poor people. Don Argemiro, my neighbor, tells me it is outrageous

that one invests so much money in a son for the army to place him at the front line and sacrifice him in a matter of hours. He speaks with authority; he lost both his children and now only a miserable old age awaits him, with a charity pension.

KENNEDY. — We are not poor. And the army is not a bad experience, as they say. One travels, meets people.

AMINTA. — And if you like it because you did not sign up on your school's lists?

KENNEDY. — I am only interested in the navy, or the air force.

AMINTA. — Typical macho mentality. But the fees are too high. Would you like some yogurt?

KENNEDY. — (blushing) No...

AMINTA. — (maternal) Raising a child brings hardships. As children they jump in the streets, where the momentum of cars threatens to run them over; in school they catch all kinds of bacteria, and if they do not fall ill then, they die of harmful pains in adulthood; teachers abuse them with their grades; and in adolescence they are subject to the whims of women.

KENNEDY. — I have never allowed a teacher to abuse their authority over me.

AMINTA. — True. Humberto told me about your dispute with the paleography teacher. And what

about women?

KENNEDY. — I have little to tell you. You yourself are a woman. I do not frequent brothels. I am too handsome for that.

AMINTA. — Vain! How many girlfriends do you have?

KENNEDY. — One.

AMINTA. — Only one? At your age Humberto had three.

KENNEDY. — Perhaps now he has two.

(Aminta blushes and types furiously.)

KENNEDY. — I am prudent, but since you force me to touch on this subject, you should know that my mother is quite worried about my father's well-being. Francisco is a violent man and has already beaten you several times, which has earned you several visits to the hospital. So if you value my father in any way, I beg you, leave him.

(Aminta slaps Kennedy.)

AMINTA. — Impertinent brat!

(Kennedy steps back, passing his palm over his cheek and spitting onto the tile, making sure he is not bleeding.)

SCENE 16 - AMINTA, HUMBERTO, KENNEDY

(Humberto enters with a piece of aluminum in his hands.)

HUMBERTO. — What are you doing here so early? I was expecting you at noon.

KENNEDY. — I am on vacation. I need you to pay me the debt we have pending.

HUMBERTO. — What for?

KENNEDY. — I am going to play billiards with some friends.

HUMBERTO. — The army comes first. Besides, I already told you I would not give you more money for vices.

KENNEDY. — It is my only pastime!

HUMBERTO. — (mocking) Billiards! Do not think people do not tell me who you go around with; tell that little girl to subsidize your appetites.

KENNEDY. — I am not asking her for money. It is a debt.

HUMBERTO. — Oh, is it? And how did you get

that money?

KENNEDY. — From my allowance.

HUMBERTO. — And who gives you your allowance? I do. So if we are talking about who collects debts first, you would owe me a fortune.

KENNEDY. — Do you not respect my savings?

HUMBERTO. — You never lacked food.

KENNEDY. — But...

HUMBERTO. — I will pay you later. Now go.

KENNEDY. — I thought we were going to discuss the army.

HUMBERTO. — (uneasy) Yes, but I already spoke with Don Marino. Do not worry; I will find a solution. Perhaps I can get you a regular position as some general's secretary. Now go back home and help your mother with the cleaning, or go practice some healthy sport, like athletics; I already have enough work to do.

KENNEDY. — Then take your money! I do not need it; and do not worry about arranging my military card: today I will present myself at the barracks as a volunteer.

HUMBERTO. — I am glad you think that way. Now go back home; your mother is waiting for you.

KENNEDY. — It will not happen again. But my decision is free; do not think I have become more submissive.

HUMBERTO. — There is nothing more to discuss.

KENNEDY. — Our past is painful, marked by mistreatment, abuse, mockery, contempt, lies, insinuations; everything passes, but neither are you willing to change, nor am I willing for it to happen again. Your indifference, right now, when the civil war advances, is clear proof of what I am saying.

HUMBERTO. — What you need is to suffer.

KENNEDY. — Tell that to my sister.

HUMBERTO. — Matilde has her own problems.

KENNEDY. — Of course. Such a negligent drug addict.

HUMBERTO. — I will not allow you to mock your sister in my presence!

KENNEDY. — Why do you not send her to a rehabilitation center? It will cost you less than the waste of her fifteenth birthday.

HUMBERTO. — You always reproaching me for that party! What do you know about our social conventions? A woman must stand out in society; it is the only way she can secure a good husband.

KENNEDY. — Husband? I thought you would send her to study in Bogotá.

HUMBERTO. — I have not decided yet.

KENNEDY. — I am sorry that Matilde failed this year.

HUMBERTO. — What?

KENNEDY. — That is what her friends told me; she failed three subjects. An unpleasant incident; but perhaps you can help her. Simply call one of her teachers and offer her a generous gift.

HUMBERTO. — You envy her.

KENNEDY. — In that case, it is your duty to question the motives of that envy.

HUMBERTO. — Resentful!

KENNEDY. — That is right: insult me; I am not your son, but another of your subordinates. Your love is not generous, but sporadic and calculated. I am not so slow as not to notice your preferences.

HUMBERTO. — Behave like a man! Be a man!

KENNEDY. — I will, with a rifle, shooting at anyone who crosses my path. Do not even think of coming to the barracks to visit me!

HUMBERTO. — Now you have really crossed

the line! One more word and I will have to teach you to restrain yourself.

KENNEDY. — Restrain myself? With whom? With an adulterous thief?

(Aminta screams. Humberto lunges at Kennedy and strikes him.)

SCENE 17 - AMINTA, ELIANA, HUMBERTO, KENNEDY

(Eliana enters.)

HUMBERTO. — And who do you think you are, going around messing with the boss's little girl?

ELIANA. — You have no right to hit your son!

(Humberto sees Eliana and restrains himself. Aminta gathers and arranges the papers fallen on the floor.)

HUMBERTO. — (to himself) The young master already wants the birds to shoot at the shotguns!

ELIANA. — For ten years now, abuses of parental authority have been illegal. But you will learn something about humanity in jail.

(Eliana moves toward the telephone, but

Kennedy stops her.)

ELIANA. — (exasperated) Kennedy!

KENNEDY. — The police will arrest him for a day, or less.

(Kennedy leads Eliana to a corner of the stage.)

KENNEDY. — In any case, he is my father. Today we had a disagreement, but we understand each other… in our own way.

ELIANA. — He is a savage!

KENNEDY. — I am not the only child in our family!

ELIANA. — That does not justify it! They should smash his head with a baton.

KENNEDY. — It is not easy to control our irascibility. I provoked him.

ELIANA. — What do you know about us?

KENNEDY. — Perhaps I only suspect. (muttering) Did you take the test?

(Eliana looks at Aminta for a few seconds and turns her face back to Kennedy.)

ELIANA. — Negative.

KENNEDY. — Are you sure?

ELIANA. — I took the test three times.

KENNEDY. — (disconsolate) It is a relief. I will not be able to see you this afternoon.

ELIANA. — But my house is empty.

KENNEDY. — I have theater rehearsal.

ELIANA. — I thought you had already given it up.

KENNEDY. — The academy; I still have commitments with the school.

ELIANA. — It is an ungrateful profession.

KENNEDY. — You say that because of your father.

ELIANA. — Do not talk to me about him again.

KENNEDY. — Perhaps we can go now. Could you invite me to eat something?

(Eliana turns to Aminta.)

ELIANA. — I need a high-denomination bill.

(Aminta takes out an envelope with money and gives a bill to Eliana, who signs a small slip that Aminta immediately keeps inside the envelope.)

SCENE 18 - AMINTA, HUMBERTO

MARINO. — (V.O.) Aminta!

(Eliana and Kennedy exit.)

AMINTA. — Right away! (to Humberto) It seems they have already reached an agreement.

HUMBERTO. — I knew those so-called doctors would sell themselves to the highest bidder.

(Aminta takes several documents and a checkbook.)

AMINTA. — Marino must have taken his slice of the cake as well. We, on the other hand, had a bad morning.

(Aminta exits.)

PORCIA. — (V.O.) If Eliana is involved with the son of a worker, I prefer to disengage from the matter; my daughter is prey to that adolescent rebellion that disdains her parents' prosperity and longs for the camaraderie of those in need.

(Humberto looks around furtively and exits in haste.)

SCENE 19 - PORCIA, ARDILA

Porcia enters, followed by ARDILA, a middle-aged man of short stature and broad build, with an overweight that rounds his figure and softens the general line of his body. The abdomen shows beneath the jacket, and the chest acquires a slight prominence that gives him a good-natured air, in tension with the gravity of his speech. His movements retain a certain caution, as if the body imposed its own rhythm.

The skull, partially bald, reflects the light discreetly; the beard, thick and black, frames a pale face of dry texture. The cheeks, slightly full, add volume to the face and soften the hardness of his features. His eyes, sunken but attentive, reveal a constant unease.

He wears a purple silk suit of impeccable tailoring, whose fabric adapts to the volume of the body without visible tension. The jacket, well structured, falls cleanly over the torso; the trousers maintain a correct line. The light shirt and dark tie are arranged with precision.

The contrast between the richness of the fabric and the roundness of the body produces an ambivalent image: social authority and intimate fragility coexisting in the same presence.

His hands, fine in proportion to the body, move with care. When handling objects—such as the revolver—he does so with sustained, almost clinical attention, as if in that gesture he sought to recover a control that his own body relativizes.

ARDILA. — I fear that passion will have tangible consequences. Aminta, your secretary, confirmed what I had already perceived in our previous meeting.

PORCIA. — Nowadays girls sleep with any fool before marriage; if my daughter has lost her virginity I

am prepared to send her immediately to Bogotá so she may continue her studies.

ARDILA. — Eliana is pregnant.

(Porcia takes the papers from the desk and throws them to the floor.)

PORCIA. — Impossible!

ARDILA. — There is no need to be alarmed. Your daughter is the product of a generation that disdains modesty and proclaims the primacy of instinct.

PORCIA. — Nonsense! It is because of that modesty that today both of us are respected in Bucaramanga. If it were true! (Pause) What a disgrace! My God! What a disgrace!

ARDILA. — Her blood boils, like her father's.

PORCIA. — Let us not blame the dead.

ARDILA. — Forgive me.

PORCIA. — When I learned of his death I mourned for five years. It was my tribute; my daughter is not a bastard.

ARDILA. — That mourning continues. You still behave like a widow.

(Porcia takes Ardila's hands.)

PORCIA. — I do not deny it.

ARDILA. — We have both dealt with unhappy loves.

PORCIA. — Both? I have always offered you my friendship.

ARDILA. — It is never too late. We still love each other.

PORCIA. — I only want your friendship, Eusebio.

ARDILA. — I would have left this city to travel with you to Buenos Aires; I have relatives who can help us.

PORCIA. — Eusebio! Traveling does not interest me either… You did well to forgive your wife for her infidelity. I will never marry another man.

ARDILA. — Be sincere with me. Tell me that you abandoned me at the church atrium, twenty-one years ago, because that actor was an adventurer; a liar who fled from town to town.

PORCIA. — I loved Ricardo. I still love him. Is that not reason enough?

ARDILA. — In love with a mountebank?

PORCIA. — Why not?

ARDILA. — The contempt…

PORCIA. — If it existed, it was temporary. With my persistence, everyone has come to agree with me. You should not be the exception.

(Ardila sits down, resigned.)

ARDILA. — Your name cannot endure another scandal, Doña Porcia, widow of Bolaños.

PORCIA. — I know.

(Pause. Ardila kneels before Porcia and offers her a diamond ring.)

ARDILA. — Marry me.

(Porcia lifts him up and leads him back to his desk with a smile.)

PORCIA. — The last time you promised you would not insist again.

ARDILA. — Now it is different; my name carries weight in this community; if I divorce and we announce our marriage, no one would dare question us; together we would impose a new mentality, more human, less hypocritical; the world is changing; this war occurs because of our stubbornness; we want to manage four servants at home and twenty employees at work, as before, but no one is willing to serve without privileges anymore.

PORCIA. — Neither before nor now.

ARDILA. — Eliana could even marry her lover; I know he is the son of one of your employees, but beyond any prejudice, he is the father of your grandchild. Our country still suffers from the aristocratic traditions of Europe; it is time we assume the tenets of the French Revolution, when Christian ideas were secularized and put into practice through the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

PORCIA. — Your words offend me, Eusebio.

ARDILA. — Forgive me, I…

ARDILA. — Porcia, where is your affection?

PORCIA. — I lost it; from our encounters I barely remember one image: both of us, sitting by the entrance of a house on the plateau of Ruitoque, at dusk.

ARDILA. — We can still begin again.

PORCIA. — That image is not loving, but nostalgic; it is no longer worth it.

ARDILA. — Yes! (Desperate) A whole life of sacrifices!

(Ardila suppresses his crying, emitting a groan.)

PORCIA. — When you grow old you will be able to rest, like your father, like your grandfather, like your great-grandfather, like your great-great-grandfather;

people still remember him as a hero of our independence.

ARDILA. — Eliana wants to have an abortion.

(Pause. Porcia ignores his words.)

PORCIA. — What happened with the check?

ARDILA. — My negligence.

PORCIA. — You have become… forgetful.

ARDILA. — I live without meaning. (Pause.) I lie. Your cruelty gives me hope.

PORCIA. — How is your wife?

ARDILA. — Her body is also declining.

PORCIA. — And yet we always feel we are the same.

ARDILA. — Every time I see her I wonder whether I am nothing but a feeling committed to a foreign body.

PORCIA. — Do you still blame me for your romantic misfortunes?

ARDILA. — I only know that without love I am something less than a corpse.

PORCIA. — Let us not be pathetic, Eusebio. You are a healthy man, with three children…

ARDILA. — Your maternalism hurts me even more than your contempt.

PORCIA. — I heard the governor wants to award you for your career as a neurosurgeon.

ARDILA. — The tedium of these last years forces me to work more diligently. But that is not the reason; the guerrilla wants to kidnap me.

PORCIA. — Which forces you to take precautions. Is it true that you bought a revolver?

(Ardila takes a revolver from his jacket; he holds it naturally, as just another object in his argument.)

ARDILA. — .38 caliber. I do not want to endure the agonies of kidnapping.

(He slowly spins the weapon between his fingers; the barrel describes small arcs as he continues.)

PORCIA. — You are suffering from depression, Eusebio. It will pass. Despite everything, you are a good man. Have you thought about your relatives?

ARDILA. — They are only waiting to see me underground to dispute my fortune; someone wrote to me that my wife planned to poison me.

(He slides his thumb over the cylinder; it yields slightly, without opening fully.)

PORCIA. — Slander; you did not believe it.

ARDILA. — I recognized my brother-in-law's handwriting; perhaps he has become a guerrilla. The perversity of our fellow citizens lurks in each of their words. No; I am not depressed. Perhaps I am becoming schizophrenic, or pessimistic.

(He brings the revolver closer to the table; his index finger brushes the trigger without pressing it.)

ARDILA. — Without you, I am left only with the certainty of my death, when the masks fall and no one is capable of hiding their lies. The just and the wicked divided, each forming a community. For the greatest difference between life and death is dissimulation. What greater punishment or reward than truth? To discover perversity in those we love? Or sweetness in those we despise?

PORCIA. — Each must survive.

ARDILA. — Prevail, Porcia. After all, surviving is not difficult; we are beasts.

PORCIA. — Beasts?

ARDILA. — Of the worst kind. I take, for example, our governor, who wants to decorate me for my lineage. Not long ago he confessed that his citizens were bridled colts. According to him, only discipline restrains anarchy. His words are not a negation, but an admonition. What can be expected, moreover, from a man who equates his fellow men with animals? Not without reason the Spanish writer Francisco Ayala, exiled by the Franco dictatorship, wrote from Argentina that

the power exercised by man over his fellow man was always a usurpation.

(He raises the weapon and observes it in profile; the line of the barrel aligns with his gaze.)

PORCIA. — It is because of impiety. (Suddenly attentive to the weapon) Is it loaded?

ARDILA. — (He pauses; looks at the revolver, then at Porcia.) Let's see…

(With a sudden gesture, he brings the revolver to his temple, pulling the trigger.)

PORCIA. — My God! (Frightened) What is this?

ARDILA. — I wanted to show you that I am not aggressive, not even with myself. In fact, I never load it, for safety. And you know… those who have accidents are the ones who forget they loaded them.

(He lowers the revolver; his thumb again runs over the cylinder, now without tension.)

PORCIA. — You gave me a fright.

ARDILA. — It is not that the world is impious, Porcia, no; we believe in God, but we adapt Him to our whims. Do you not see the crowds during Holy Week processions, the choir of children in Africa who are castrated and flayed by terrorist religious groups? This discord fosters more discord; it is contagious. And in our Western civilization, mothers kill their children in their

wombs.

PORCIA. — I see…

ARDILA. — What decision are you going to make about Eliana?

PORCIA. — I already told you, abortion is the most viable option. It is useless for you to persuade me, Eusebio.

(Ardila puts away his revolver and hands an envelope to Porcia.)

ARDILA. — There is something else I wanted to speak to you about. In that envelope you will find notes that you may collect after my death.

PORCIA. — I have never needed your money.

ARDILA. — This sudden desire I have to give it to you must be providential. (Pause) Do you think Eliana will consent?

PORCIA. — If she learns of my will, no. My daughter is capable of giving me a bastard grandchild out of sheer desire to offend me.

ARDILA. — Eliana must decide for herself.

PORCIA. — In no way; I will resolve this matter today; I will pay her friends to persuade her.

ARDILA. — Your secretary?

PORCIA. — My daughter trusts her. She has always trusted those who hate me.

(Eusebio staggers as he advances toward the main door.)

PORCIA. — Do you want me to call an ambulance?

ARDILA. — No, thank you.

(Ardila tries to kiss Porcia, who rejects him.)

PORCIA. — We are not adolescents.

Scene 20 – Aminta, Daniela, Enriqueta, Marino, Porcia

(Aminta, Marino, Enriqueta, and Daniela enter. Ardila exits.)

MARINO. — We have reached an agreement that will surprise you, Doña Porcia.

ENRIQUETA. — (to Porcia) I assure you that no other supervisor will come to bother you this year. And if our party remains in power next year, you can be certain that we will both look after your interests again.

DANIELA. — (reading a typed sheet) "Your accounts are correct, your tax payments punctual. The

returns on your investment merit a government credit." (Signing the sheet) Our Republic depends on citizens like you, Doña Porcia.

(Marino hands two checks to Porcia, who signs them after examining them.)

PORCIA. — I knew I could trust you, honorable citizens, hardworking, responsible…

(Porcia hands the two checks to Enriqueta.)

ENRIQUETA. — It has been a pleasure.

PORCIA. — I will have an overdraft for a dozen more salaries, but I trust that Providence will help us overcome this crisis. I would like us to close this agreement and begin our friendship with a lunch at the Club de las Liebres.

ENRIQUETA. — I have never heard of it.

PORCIA. — It is new. The specialty of the kitchen is game meat, of course.

DANIELA. — Thank you, but we have already

Scene 21 - Aminta, Marino, Porcia

Enriqueta and Daniela exit.)

PORCIA. — (stunned) Another invitation? (Pause) And you, Don Marino?

MARINO. — I have another engagement. You know, my wife...

(Porcia exits with a thoughtful frown.)

SCENE 22 - AMINTA, MARINO

(Marino smiles at Aminta; he goes to the desk and takes out a checkbook. He prepares to leave.)

MARINO. — (whispering) Do not worry. I will leave you alone so you can discuss any embezzlement at your leisure.

AMINTA. — Are you going to have lunch with the doctors?

(Marino bursts out laughing.)

SCENE 23 - AMINTA, HUMBERTO, MARINO

(Humberto enters without his apron, with wet, well-combed hair.)

MARINO. — Behave! Remember you are

married!

(Marino exits.)

SCENE 24 - AMINTA, HUMBERTO

HUMBERTO. — Sooner or later he will ask us for a commission.

AMINTA. — The only one who worries me is my husband.

HUMBERTO. — Is he connected with the paramilitaries?

AMINTA. — What a question! No; I do not think so. But if I knew, I would not tell you.

(Humberto takes her in his arms and lifts her onto the desk, uncovering her leg.)

HUMBERTO. — Did you already send the windows to Don Rodrigo?

AMINTA. — Not yet. Don Marino was watching me.

HUMBERTO. — I noticed that too.

AMINTA. — Doña Porcia must be blind if she does not suspect his commissions. At this rate this company will go bankrupt before the year ends.

(Humberto kisses her arm passionately.)

AMINTA. — (suddenly) Sooner or later they will discover us. Have you thought about what we will do afterward?

HUMBERTO. — (joking) Perhaps we will get divorced.

AMINTA. — Are you not cold? If we hurry and take a taxi we will have time to have lunch at my house; my husband is on the coast. You know, selling ties.

(Humberto laughs. Aminta and Humberto kiss. Blackout.)

ACT II

SCENE 25 - MARINO, PORCIA

Same space, three months later. A glass vase on the desk. The characters wear strict mourning. Porcia wears a black ensemble of impeccable cut: blouse of dense fabric, without transparency, perfectly pressed, and a straight skirt of heavy fall. A short veil, discreetly fastened, barely touches her forehead.

Her jewelry, reduced to a fine-link gold chain, retains a contained shine. The makeup has softened: the skin appears more matte, the lips in a muted tone, without concession.

Marino wears a black suit of precise tailoring, white shirt without creases and dark tie, knotted with exactness. The ensemble does not express grief but correctness: his mourning is administrative, without visible emotional weight.

PORCIA. — (in a tired tone, though without falling into melancholy) He was a just man. I knew him since we were children. During the dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla he wrote several articles against the regime.

MARINO. — Those were times! The poor had subsidies for milk, like in Venezuela. Do you know that the General was the first to use the weapons of mass destruction that the United States uses against other countries?

PORCIA. — (uninterested) Do not tell me.

MARINO. — I believe we are still paying the interest for the purchase of those bombs. The point is that my General used them against the communist strongholds of Tolima. My uncle, may he rest in peace, tells me that the destruction was the same we saw in seventy-two, when journalists photographed it from Vietnam. Of course, at that time the General did not have television equipment to record his victories.

PORCIA. — You believe everything you are told. If that were so, we would not have the plague that afflicts us today. One can no longer go to the countryside in peace. The roads are infested with criminals and kidnappers.

MARINO. — Be careful with your words; I advise you to adapt your mentality to the opinion of the majority.

PORCIA. — How?

MARINO. — If the conflict favors the revolutionaries, it is time we celebrate their victories and defame our congressmen.

PORCIA. — What are you implying? Marino!

MARINO. — Do not be afraid, Doña Porcia; the poor will always support whoever is in power, whether it be a dictator of the left or the right.

PORCIA. — Colombia is a democracy.

MARINO. — An oligarchy, in my opinion.

PORCIA. — Have you become a communist, Marino?

MARINO. — No; I do not allow myself to be manipulated with illusions. But a democracy requires equality among its members; otherwise it is an oligarchy, whether left or right.

(Pause)

PORCIA. — I do not feel like arguing now. (Pause.) Poor Eusebio; to have died murdered. Just one day after the kidnapping of Senator Goncourt.

MARINO. — He died with honor, as brave as any of our soldiers. One could say he shed his blood for our government, although there is some contradiction in praising a victim in that way.

PORCIA. — Had he not been armed, he would have come out unharmed.

MARINO. — Did he owe you a lot of money?

PORCIA. — Quite a lot.

MARINO. — A debt that warrants hiring a lawyer.

PORCIA. — Two. I met with them last night; as soon as I learned of his murder.

MARINO. — You did well. Even so, judicial processes here are very slow. By the time you claim your

money, the heirs will have already stripped his properties.

PORCIA. — I have my influence. God willing, today we will manage to process the seizure order.

MARINO. — (surprised) Not badly prepared. You are a cautious woman.

PORCIA. — If I were not, I would never have sent Eliana to another country.

MARINO. — To other countries. Unless you think, like so many journalists, that England is merely another overseas territory of the United States.

PORCIA. — What nonsense you speak! Eliana writes to me that there everyone behaves with ease, as in the BBC series from London.

MARINO. — I do not dispute it. (Malicious) I would have liked to have attended her wedding.

PORCIA. — What wedding?

MARINO. — Eliana's! Darío is your son-in-law's name, is it not?

PORCIA. — Darío?

MARINO. — You do not need to pretend with me.

PORCIA. — Who told you?

MARINO. — Who would have thought that Cándida, the daughter of the Gómez family, would catch Eliana on her vacation trip marrying in secret with a Galician at the Chester town hall?

PORCIA. — It is only a rumor. I am sure Eliana will clarify what happened.

MARINO. — You do not seem very happy.

PORCIA. — I am glad she came to Bucaramanga for vacation, but who would be happy to know that her only daughter has married a stranger, some Darío?

MARINO. — I would! I am a practical man. It is natural that you had hoped Eliana would secure an American or British husband, but any Spaniard is preferable to Kennedy.

(Porcia notices the coffee bag is empty.)

PORCIA. — Damn it! Where is my coffee?

MARINO. — Is it finished?

(Porcia locks the cabinet.)

PORCIA. — This office is infested with rats!

MARINO. — Do not look at me as if I were to blame, Doña Porcia. You know how little I come to this office.

PORCIA. — Was it Aminta?

(Marino laughs.)

MARINO. — You are an intelligent woman. But too generous; when you are away Humberto and Aminta drink as if in their own home.

PORCIA. — Humberto? Him too?

MARINO. — Today is the day of the ambush…

PORCIA. — (skeptical) We shall see whether your defamations are true.

MARINO. — Both are a pair of rogues, you will see.

PORCIA. — If that is so I will have to dismiss them. Then I will be forced to train a new secretary and a new head of personnel. No matter whom I hire, no matter the salary I offer them, after some time I will be forced to denounce and dismiss them.

MARINO. — It is the war atmosphere. Perhaps you need someone trustworthy, honest, whom you pay six times better than Humberto.

Scene 26 - Kennedy, Marino, Porcia

Both look at each other intensely. Kennedy, dark-circled and pale, enters wearing a military field uniform.

The field uniform, in earthy tones, bursts into the black space of mourning like a living stain. Sweat has darkened some areas of the fabric; however, the garment retains structure and functionality. The machine gun, clean and operational, hangs with real weight over his torso.
He pants from exhaustion. A machine gun hangs from his neck.

PORCIA. — (frightened) Good God! What do you want?

MARINO. — Why, it is Humberto's son!

PORCIA. — (disturbed) Of course! I did not recognize him. So early?

MARINO. — He should be at the barracks.

KENNEDY. — Doña Porcia! Help me! I must put on civilian clothes. If they find me they will kill me.

(Marino laughs.)

MARINO. — Who?

KENNEDY. — Two men! I think they are wandering confused on the corner! If they see any uniformed man, none of you has seen me. May I go to the bathroom?

PORCIA. — Were you the one who volunteered at the barracks?

KENNEDY. — I had no other alternative to

choose. (He looks at Marino, nervous:) My father wanted to buy me the military card, but I know how to behave with honesty. I have fulfilled my duty to the homeland.

MARINO. — (distrustful) Really?

KENNEDY. — Besides, the militia is an unforgettable experience; one has access to tanks, helicopters, frigates…

MARINO. — Who are your pursuers?

KENNEDY. — (ignoring Marino) When I was a child I never believed I would have access to those machines, but as a soldier today I feel almost the owner of everything. May I use the bathroom?

PORCIA. — You do not know how much I love hearing a soldier so enthusiastic.

KENNEDY. — How is Eliana?

(Porcia looks at Marino.)

PORCIA. — The bathroom is at the end of the left corridor.

(Kennedy exits.)

SCENE 27 – MARINO, PORCIA

MARINO. — I do not like this at all; the boy has gotten himself into serious trouble. We must call the battalion.

PORCIA. — So that the workshop's work is paralyzed for a day? I already suffer enough idleness with so many holidays. You would do better to sit down and limit yourself to updating the account books; your proposals only bring me headaches.

(Porcia picks at her face, trying to extract dirt from her left eye.)

MARINO. — For that you should practice your daily intimate bath.

PORCIA. — Excuse me?

MARINO. — It is a bath that will help you eliminate tensions and toxins from your body, as well as solve problems of constipation. It was practiced by the ancient Egyptians and, I can assure you, it works. Since I do it I have regained my sexual strength.

PORCIA. — (blushing) Marino! I have never heard you speak that way.

MARINO. — I do it for your longevity. I could also recommend that you drink your urine upon waking.

PORCIA. — (disgusted) It is repugnant!

MARINO. — Like every potion; and it is called urophagy, from the Greek, uron, urine, and phagein, to

ingest, although that is a remedy I have not yet tasted.

PORCIA. — (irritated) Did you know that the mishaps suffered during the government's visit left me bedridden for three days?

MARINO. — In eighteen years that I have been working in this place I do not remember having seen you absent three days from this office.

PORCIA. — It was during a weekend.

MARINO. — And now, are you well?

PORCIA. — Help me with this eyelash, will you?

MARINO. — (nervous) You do not know what you are doing by sheltering that boy.

(Marino blows into Porcia's eye. She blinks with discomfort.)

MARINO. — I also did military service. Kennedy must be a deserter, or in the worst case a collaborator of the guerrilla.

PORCIA. — Marino! But he is barely a child!

MARINO. — With a machine gun in his hands? It is not a toy, believe me. Two weeks at the front are enough to turn a tadpole into a killer. Did he not tell us that his companions were looking for him to execute him?

PORCIA. — I did not hear such nonsense.

MARINO. — He said: “if they find me they will kill me”.

PORCIA. — He could have said it in a figurative sense.

MARINO. — Tell that to someone else. Kennedy could have murdered an officer. There are superiors who become obsessed with soldiers; they torture them, corner them, intimidate them, bait them…

PORCIA. — For what?

MARINO. — So that they hate, so that their hand does not tremble when they are ordered to execute a wretch, a traitor, a kidnapper.

PORCIA. — It is inhuman.

MARINO. — Inhuman for those who live and die in the city, among cotton sheets and silver cutlery. This revolution is the oldest in the world, you know? Our women no longer give birth to men, but to sharks that devour one another; Kennedy, with his rifle, has escaped his cage. Let me help you.

(Marino blows into Porcia’s eye, but she stumbles clinging to Marino; both fall to the floor in a compromising pose. Porcia kisses him, just as Aminta enters carrying a bouquet of roses.)

Scene 28 - Aminta, Marino, Porcia

Aminta wears mourning without solemnity: a black blouse of light fabric, slightly fitted, and a dark skirt of everyday use. There is no veil or ornament; black in her is not a symbol, but adaptation. The sleeves show slight signs of wear, although the garment is clean.)

AMINTA. — (trying to conceal her disturbance) Good morning; what a miracle to see Don Marino so early. May I use the vase, Doña Porcia?

PORCIA. — (rising; recovering her dignity, to Marino:) But who do you think you are? (To Aminta) If it is there, it must be to be used.

MARINO. — Did you steal them from the funeral?

(Aminta arranges the flowers in the vase.)

AMINTA. — I knew you were going to ask me that. No. My husband sent them to me.

PORCIA. — Francisco has become a more sensitive man.

MARINO. — More repentant, I would say. I bet those carnations apologize for his last beating.

AMINTA. — He changed since he got a job.

PORCIA. — How glad that makes me.

AMINTA. — As my neighbor says, money is the best medicine against depression.

MARINO. — Said by someone who has never had money.

PORCIA. — Be more considerate with Aminta, Marino.

MARINO. — I am; otherwise I would not ask her whether her husband mistreats her or not. What is his new profession? Boxing?

AMINTA. — (cold) He bought a blue truck with a bank loan. Now he does moving jobs and delivers milk in the La Cumbre neighborhood.

(Marino looks at Porcia significantly.)

MARINO. — Who would have thought? Not even I have a truck.

(Pause.)

PORCIA. — Today I will visit my farm. I trust your diligence with the clients, Aminta. And, please… buy yourself a notebook so you can keep an inventory of the coffee; it seems I have been drinking too much lately, which is not very healthy, they say.

(Porcia exits.)

SCENE 29 – AMINTA, MARINO

AMINTA. — Do not worry. (To Marino) Doña Porcia seems somewhat agitated.

MARINO. — It is no wonder; you know how closely her interests were tied to those of Doctor Ardila.

AMINTA. — The murmurs have not been long in coming. Everyone knows that the guerrilla camps at the salto del duende on Saturday nights. Even the army avoids patrolling those places. He died near Lola Vives's house.

MARINO. — Ah! So the mourners have concocted an idyll between Eusebio Ardila and that forgotten actress? The malicious thoughts of people know no limits.

AMINTA. — What a rotten imagination! What they say is that he went looking for his own death.

MARINO. — (meditative, with ironic pleasure) No!

AMINTA. — A man in his right mind would not go armed to a place like that; in any case, he issued several bad checks.

MARINO. — That proves nothing! I know that Ardila left a fortune when he died; his only significant debt would be with Porcia.

AMINTA. — With us?

MARINO. — With us! Who else, besides you, enjoys the profits of this company?

AMINTA. — How much is the debt?

MARINO. — Two hundred minimum wages.

AMINTA. — Impossible! The doctor did not owe us more than ten wages.

MARINO. — Obviously! It must have been in payment for your personal services.

AMINTA. — Infamous! He…

MARINO. — Do not be scandalized! The boss is also a woman of flesh and blood; they say that Eliana's father was Ricardo el Gozón.

AMINTA. — Who?

MARINO. — Ricardo Bolaños! The minstrel who got her pregnant with Eliana.

AMINTA. — Do you know him?

MARINO. — Since my childhood; his father and mine quarreled during the War of the Thousand Days. Since then our families detest each other.

AMINTA. — Do not tell me.

MARINO. — As I heard it, that Bolaños enlisted

in the army to evade justice. His trick was of no use; he died from a point-blank shot.

AMINTA. — What things you say?

MARINO. — He was lucky; otherwise I myself would have executed him. My grandfather made me swear, on his deathbed, that I would do everything possible to avenge myself on the Bolaños.

AMINTA. — What you tell me is too immoral to be true.

MARINO. — Immoral?
What country do you live in, Aminta pure,
so candid in a world so dark?
Silent goodness no longer has honor,
the world tramples it with its great rigor.

Shame died in the medieval age,
today the poor man fears his brutal end,
what does it matter if they murmur that I am vile and perverse,
if gold obeys me with diverse power?

They call me murderer, pederast, thief,
and I toast calmly with ambition,
immorality is my generous mother,
she dresses me in diamonds, gives me everything.

Women, judges, laws, all at my service,
whoever does not bribe pays the high price,
I am not the only one, look at this office,
every soul is rented, each one bows.

In every institution reigns a god without entrails,
who gives, receives; who does not, drags his vices,
if you want reward, sell your dignity,
purity does not pay, it gives loneliness.

Whoever opposes the system is buried cold,
there is no possible redemption outside this war,
the saints, the fools, the idealist madmen,
fall like dry leaves from branches without artists.

It is true that whipping society is wrong,
for in the end it turns against one's own body;
for that reason many sacrifice their soul without shame
and choose soullessly the frenzy of sex.

To earn money, fame, and dominion by loving
slaves of desire and financial glitter,
they do not seek beautiful faces nor virtues to give,
but the millionaire man, arrogant and fleeting.

Thus among all we raise the capital sin,
seasoned with liquor, with drugs and excesses;
legal or forbidden, they nullify all discomfort
now without peace in this world and the next.

The father of Eliana may have been a comedian, but he took advantage of Doña Porcia, in the same way that she took advantage of the deceased.

AMINTA. — Doctor Ardila was in love with Doña Porcia; if he left her his fortune it must have been with the best intentions.

MARINO. — The boss has a suspicious luck!

The Ardila family still retains considerable capital in real estate. Of course love does not drive anyone to despair. Such is life! Only the honest suffer! The honest, those who morally go into debt with banks, and as in the systems of the mita and the encomienda, work like slaves, chained for life to the payment of their interest. (Pause.) Yes, no honest person will be able to account to us for that debt… Do you know that the greatest cause of suicide in elderly men is impotence?

AMINTA. — Do not tell me that you want to kill yourself.

(Aminta laughs.)

MARINO. — At my age I mock this new generation of substance dependents; smoking, drinking and taking pills before fornicating… If he killed himself it must have been to take revenge on his wife.

AMINTA. — On that harlot? I feel sorrow for the three little orphans.

MARINO. — Such brats! With the insurance money, they will get something to drug themselves.

AMINTA. — Why do you always have to think so badly of people? I will never forgive your attitude the day we learned of the death of Princess Lady D; such a paragon of virtues, so elegant, so well-groomed, raised among palaces, revered by people who speak the most refined English, friend of the poor.

MARINO. — Yes; admired for the dyes of her

blonde hair and repudiated for having fallen in love with an Arab.

AMINTA. — Heartless! Still mocking her weaknesses!

MARINO. — How is it possible that you feel sadness for a stranger you only saw on the covers of fashion magazines? Her funeral showed to what extent civilized people lack compassion.

AMINTA. — Now you dare to criticize the most sophisticated people in this world?

MARINO. — Of course; people who never shed a tear for the hardships of their neighbors, and who become depressed by the disappearance of a byproduct of television.

AMINTA. — Where will those little angels go without their mother?

MARINO. — Aminta.

AMINTA. — Yes?

MARINO. — I know a doctor who can help you recover your fertility.

AMINTA. — (meditative) I… Thank you, but we have no interest whatsoever in having children.

MARINO. — Think of your old age.

AMINTA. — Besides, that would be selfish.

MARINO. — Why?

AMINTA. — We all must die.

MARINO. — Ah! I see that Kennedy has made you fond of poetry. Where did I see that poem?

(Marino opens a drawer of his desk and takes out a sheet of paper which he reads.)

MARINO
We all must die, I tell you
The most leafy leaf, the lightest breeze,
That stream the anemones traced.
We all must die, I tell you.

The water running through those childish arms,
My evenings that broke nations.
We all must die, I tell you,
And yet we rarely converse.

Life, like death, passes unattainable.
They stole my boots upon arrival, you know?
Laughter was sharper than steel.
Another day I was a thief, the previous a recruit.

The law here is that of the most savage.
They say, Jesus, that he who does not kill saves his Self,
But the soul here is worth less than a cigarette.
He who shows mercy does not wake at dawn.

He who doubts has already dug his grave,

Although not all of us will be perverse,
With the name erased from his tomb
I have seen mothers gather their remains.

I choose to be a killer before they kill me,
That is what in the militia they teach me:
Not out of hatred, nor for glory,
Only so as not to be the next to die.

I sense the steps of the mountain,
Of what I was, of what they forced me to be.
There is no redemption where everything burns,
Nor homeland where children aim rifles at me.

We all must die, I tell you,
Late for you, for me early
If you heard the order, you would also flee,
blood that I spill and does not belong to me

AMINTA. — Kennedy could have been a writer.

MARINO. — He is; that is his problem. In any case, do not give up, Aminta; I can help you.

AMINTA. — What are you up to, Don Marino?

MARINO. — We all know that your husband is sterile. You, I imagine, have placed your hopes in Humberto.

AMINTA. — I will not admit your insidious remarks again!

(Marino, gripping her waist tightly, pulls her

toward him.)

MARINO. — Do you already know that Humberto had surgery last week so as not to engender?

AMINTA. — No! You invent!

MARINO. — Ask him!

(Aminta bites his left earlobe; Marino shouts and instinctively steps back.)

MARINO. — What a beast!

SCENE 30 - AMINTA, KENNEDY, MARINO

Kennedy enters wearing a greasy T-shirt and tight pants; his abandonment of the uniform definitively breaks the visual unity of mourning: the T-shirt, stained and clinging to the body, introduces a material register alien to the previous order. The tight pants accentuate the character's physical tension.

Aminta stands up without surprise; her behavior will be more distracted from now until the end of the piece.

AMINTA. — Kennedy!

MARINO. — Do not tell me they have already promoted him.

SCENE 31 – KENNEDY, MARINO

Aminta exits with the broken stems of the flowers. Marino walks toward the telephone.

KENNEDY. — Call them! And tell them to come collect your corpse!

MARINO. — What corpse? I only wanted to call my wife.

KENNEDY. — Your wife? Then it will be a double crime; I never leave relatives alive.

MARINO. — (hesitant) You will not get away with this. Do not threaten me; I am an honorable man.

KENNEDY. — We are all involved in this brawl. An office job grants you no privilege; you behave like the bureaucrats of international organizations; they grant us loans so that we may pay them for their consultancy.

(Kennedy lounges on a sofa and takes a dagger from his pants.)

KENNEDY. — Do not worry. It is to clean my nails.

MARINO. — I am not worried! I am outraged!

(Marino picks up the receiver and dials a

number.)

MARINO. — It is a routine call; remember that I am working.

KENNEDY. — I hope so.

MARINO. — Are you going to massacre all of us with your machine gun? Hello?... You may proceed whenever you wish... That time is fine. Goodbye. (Marino hangs up and observes Kennedy carefully.) Jesus! What will your father think when he sees you? What did you do? Did you kill a subordinate or an officer?

KENNEDY. — A meddler.

MARINO. — Your lightness makes you more suspicious.

KENNEDY. — You know the army well. I plan to travel to the United States.

MARINO. — Do not tell me!

KENNEDY. — I need money.

MARINO. — Do I look like a banker?

KENNEDY. — You may call me a blackmailer if you wish, but I need three thousand dollars. I will leave you my rifle as collateral, which is worth a little more than that.

MARINO. — That used piece of iron is not worth more than a thousand dollars. Ask your father for it.

KENNEDY. — If he does not give it to me I will speak with Doña Porcia. The corrupt have enslaved us; it is time they pay.

MARINO. — I am not corrupt; you mistake me for a certain politician. Why do you not go out to protest with stones and Molotov cocktails at the houses of senators?

KENNEDY. — The politicians are not the most corrupt, but the anonymous mass that supports them, with beings like you, eager for mistresses and commissions. They told me you keep bundles of dollars in the walls of your house.

MARINO. — Infamies!

KENNEDY. — If you do not give them to me I will call the DAS.

MARINO. — Speak with your father; he keeps his savings in a cookie tin.

KENNEDY. — With whom did you swindle a few months ago?

(Marino takes a checkbook from his drawer.)

KENNEDY. — In cash.

MARINO. — (smiling) I can get it for you this afternoon. Although it may not seem so, I am a kind person. Think that I do it out of charity. I will take your rifle as guarantee.

KENNEDY. — If I were you I would speak more carefully. One never knows.

(Marino prepares to leave.)

Scene 32 – Aminta, Kennedy, Marino

(Aminta enters with a yogurt, a slice of cake, a banana and a chocolate bar.)

AMINTA. — Would you like some?

KENNEDY. — I am not starving.

MARINO. — (sarcastic) Did you hear that Eliana has a husband in England?

AMINTA. — (hesitant) Darío Ortiz? The Galician?

(Kennedy looks at them angrily.)

MARINO. — The same.

AMINTA. — Inventions, Kennedy. It is true that Cándida Gómez, the councilman's daughter, saw them

during her visit to the Chester town hall, but the matter of their wedding is nothing more than a mere supposition.

(Marino exits.)

SCENE 33 – AMINTA, KENNEDY

Aminta offers her snack to Kennedy.

AMINTA. — You must be hungry.

(Kennedy takes the snack without protest and eats eagerly.)

AMINTA. — Francisco has told me how hard life in the army was for him. Of course this was fifteen years ago, but it is enough for me to notice your dark circles to be certain that everything remains the same; if not worse.

KENNEDY. — My mother told me that you and my father ended your relationship.

AMINTA. — (ignoring him) My husband is a good worker. Now that he has the opportunity to make money he speaks with me every night. He has even proposed that I resign; that way I will be able to devote myself to our apartment. If everything continues like this we will be able to conceive a baby before this year ends.

KENNEDY. — I do not understand how you

can live with such a miserable salary.

AMINTA. — (surprised) It is not bad. And that ring?

KENNEDY. — Oh!

(Kennedy instinctively hides his face.)

KENNEDY. — A friend gave it to me…

AMINTA. — Womanizer! It must have cost her a fortune.

SCENE 34 – AMINTA, HUMBERTO, KENNEDY

Humberto enters in street clothes; his appearance seems younger. He carries a plastic bag in his hands. He smiles, but his expression fades as soon as he sees Kennedy.

HUMBERTO. — And the old woman?

AMINTA. — She said she had pending matters at her farm.

HUMBERTO. — And you, did you ask for leave?

KENNEDY. — I grew tired of military slavery.

HUMBERTO. — Unbelievable! The only thing we were lacking, Kennedy Gamarra. You will report back to the battalion immediately or I will drag you there by the ear!

(Kennedy raises his feet onto the desk.)

KENNEDY. — What do you prefer? That I sacrifice myself for the well-being of our masters? My grandparents were mere servants of landowners; and you another puppet of this provincial aristocracy. I have my own principles.

HUMBERTO. — Anarchic! Now I understand. So the young gentleman wants to change sides? Very well, the doors are open; go look for your accomplices in the mountains; but in fifteen days do not come to ask me to protect you, because the subversives never forgive a deserter; if I see you again I will denounce you. I will not be so stupid as to sacrifice myself for a traitor.

KENNEDY. — If you were not capable of sacrificing yourself for your son.

HUMBERTO. — I am not a wealthy man. You know that.

KENNEDY. — Oh no? And then how was it that you managed to subsidize Matilde's education in Bogotá?

HUMBERTO. — (desperate) Do not be envious!

KENNEDY. — Should I resign myself? I have

always been your most disadvantaged son, I have always endured your tyranny. But I do not blame you. You gave all your affection to a single daughter. We all commit injustices under autocratic governments.

AMINTA. — (conciliatory) Are you a revolutionary?

KENNEDY. — I fight for myself.

HUMBERTO. — Not even a paramilitary?

KENNEDY. — Not even; you have begotten a parasite.

(Kennedy takes out a campaign knife and plays with it in his hands while whistling a melancholic tune. Humberto takes from his bag his key and a pound of coffee and begins to prepare himself a hot cup.)

AMINTA. — I think Marino betrayed us, Humberto.

HUMBERTO. — (to Kennedy) Do you have anything else to say to me?

KENNEDY. — I do not remember having said anything to you.

AMINTA. — Kennedy!

KENNEDY. — I am fed up with that stupid name. In the battalion they call me "Matasiete". Guess why.

(Aminta heads toward the side exit. Kennedy stops her. Humberto pours himself his cup of coffee with a dejected expression.)

KENNEDY. — (to Aminta) Is Eliana coming today?

AMINTA. — Maybe. I do not know.

(Aminta exits.)

SCENE 35 - KENNEDY, HUMBERTO

KENNEDY. — (to Humberto) A few days ago I was determined to join an anarchic group. After living like a pig, I had convinced myself of the futility of government, of the corruption you always spoke to me about, and to which, nevertheless, you always seemed to adhere. Today I find no sense in killing myself for a despotic band. As a subordinate I am nothing but scum.

HUMBERTO. — You are young, Kennedy; when you mature you will know that without sacrifice there is no progress.

KENNEDY. — Without sacrifice of whom? For whom?

HUMBERTO. — Of the one who dies, for the one who survives.

(Kennedy bursts into tears.)

KENNEDY. — I, who believed we were all a family!

HUMBERTO. — Forgive me. I am not a good man. Who is? Not even you; when José, your accomplice, wore a new pair of shoes, you became depressed. Envy depressed you.

KENNEDY. — And why did you not correct me? You, it is true, forced me to go to mass to listen to the gospel. But I believed that the only righteous ones were you and my mother! I believed that your envy and mine were justified! But I was wrong! I am always wrong; because you lied to me. Always saying "forgive us, as we also forgive those who offend us," without any intention of forgiving. Always relapsing into revenge and recrimination! What reason do I have now to forgive? Tell me!

HUMBERTO. — Do not wait for the world to change, Kennedy; it is you who must do so.

KENNEDY. — No!

HUMBERTO. — Always defying your own blood! Do not blame me anymore! I am not the best, but I belong to you! You are a man; Matilde is a woman, more exposed to the bitterness of the world.

KENNEDY. — Is that what you think?

HUMBERTO. — I have worked like a slave for you.

KENNEDY. — Your indolence toward me wounds me more and more. I am leaving. I need money; I deserted the army.

(Pause.)

HUMBERTO. — (contrite) How much do you need?

KENNEDY. — I already have a loan secured. Only five wages.

HUMBERTO. — Where are you going?

KENNEDY. — I cannot tell you. As soon as I arrive I will send you a postcard with my new address.

HUMBERTO. — What did you do?

KENNEDY. — Nothing serious.

HUMBERTO. — I prefer not to know; I have friends in Caracas who can help you.

KENNEDY. — I do not want to depend on you again. I am going to the United States.

HUMBERTO. — For what?

KENNEDY. — It is a country that needs mercenaries.

(Humberto hands him a key.)

HUMBERTO. — It is the key to the cupboard,

in the kitchen; you may take whatever you find.

KENNEDY. — How much?

HUMBERTO. — More than you need.

KENNEDY. — You are not lying to me?

HUMBERTO. — Business has improved.

KENNEDY. — Is that why you seduced the secretary?

HUMBERTO. — I do not know what you are talking about, and I prefer not to know.

KENNEDY. — What changed you? Time?

HUMBERTO. — Suffering, I already told you.

KENNEDY. — Whose? My mother's?

HUMBERTO. — I do not want to speak more about this matter.

KENNEDY. — Why not? Are you afraid of being insulted?

HUMBERTO. — You begin again to disrespect me; I have my convictions, Kennedy, even if you do not believe it.

KENNEDY. — Do not tell me.

HUMBERTO. — In any case I am already too

old for you to mock me at my expense.

KENNEDY. — You can no longer humiliate me, as before.

HUMBERTO. — What are you talking about

KENNEDY. — Do you not remember? Four hours waiting outside the Orthography teacher! I was eleven years old. He falsely accused me of being a marijuana user before the class. He could not conceive that I was in the street playing with my friends, imitating addicts with sugar cigarettes. And you forced me to apologize to him! And all for what? For having the audacity to take revenge by puncturing the tires of his car.

HUMBERTO. — You could have caused an accident; you could have killed him.

KENNEDY. — I speak of one offense among so many others. I cannot rid myself of them. A lifetime would not suffice to heal so much cruelty. Not even in combat zones did I feel such contempt; there each one fell, and the wounded, one way or another, received the consolation of their companions.

HUMBERTO. — If you do not forgive you sink into the past, and you cannot live toward the future.

KENNEDY. — I cannot forgive.

HUMBERTO. — I already asked you for forgiveness!

KENNEDY. — I cannot rid myself of your offenses.

HUMBERTO. — What is it that you seek?

KENNEDY. — Revenge! Not against you, but against those who have not yet suffered.

HUMBERTO. — So much resentment will not allow you to travel.

SCENE 36 – AMINTA, HUMBERTO, KENNEDY, LORENA

(LORENA, a middle-aged woman, dressed in office attire, enters and observes Kennedy with curiosity, who reacts by sitting properly and putting away his knife. Aminta follows her.)

AMINTA. — May I help you?

LORENA. — (always proud) Good morning. I would like to buy a table glass, with a thickness of twelve millimeters.

AMINTA. — Does the lady want tempered glass?

LORENA. — I am in a hurry; my truck is parked in front of the shop. How much would it cost?

(Humberto observes Kennedy, who hides his face. Aminta types numbers into her calculator.)

AMINTA. — They are in fashion; they are more striking than table furniture. But you must protect them well; it is easy to scratch them, Doña…

LORENA. — Lorena; Lorena Porras.

AMINTA. — One minimum wage, with the value added tax.

LORENA. — Is there no way I can get a discount?

AMINTA. — I am afraid not. Do you pay with a credit card?

LORENA. — Cash.

AMINTA. — (pointing to Humberto) Perhaps the head of the workshop can help you.

(Humberto and Lorena exit.)

SCENE 37 – AMINTA, KENNEDY

KENNEDY. — (to Aminta, who places the vase on the floor, next to her desk) Tell me that this was the only purpose of the affair with my father.

AMINTA. — (hesitant) If you want to see Eliana

alone, look for her in the cafeteria. She has breakfast at nine.

KENNEDY. — So she is on vacation?

AMINTA. — Until the end of the month; afterward she returns to Miami.

KENNEDY. — Every time I come to this office I witness some kind of embezzlement. For years my father asked me to behave honestly. Today he reads the gospel and selects the passages that suit him best. They are all a bunch of hypocrites!

AMINTA. — If they are, there is no reason for you to turn against him.

KENNEDY. — What should I do then? Praise him? My father must be happy with his two horns of abundance. For you deception must be a rite of consecration, or something of the sort.

AMINTA. — (furious) You treat me like a harlot. What have I done? I have never accused you of having stolen my snack.

KENNEDY. — You just did!

AMINTA. — Very well, know that I am in love with your father, that he has always loved me, and that we both plan to share our lives together!

KENNEDY. — You deceive yourself! He was only interested in your favors!

AMINTA. — Eliana, at least, was intelligent enough to have an abortion!

KENNEDY. — (distressed) What a foul mouth!

AMINTA. — I myself accompanied her to the hospital; the fetus fell onto a sheet of glass and expired; it was almost two months old. We knew that you wanted to marry her, but if you could not survive six months in the army, much less could you have raised and supported a child for a lifetime.

KENNEDY. — You say that because you are sterile.

AMINTA. — I say it because I have already had two abortions, and I am not ashamed. Conception should be forbidden until a mature age.

(Kennedy stands; his lip trembling beneath an ironic smile that he uses as a mask.)

AMINTA. — (contrite) You drove me out of my mind. Otherwise, I would never have told you.

KENNEDY. — Do not regret it; one knows everything sooner or later.

AMINTA. — Where are you going?

KENNEDY. — To buy a case for my rifle.

AMINTA. — Are you traveling? Where to?

KENNEDY. — To where no one knows me.

AMINTA. — But…

KENNEDY. — Perhaps I will join the underworld; after all I already have my credentials.

AMINTA. — What have you done?

KENNEDY. — I never become enraged with my victims; it is they who attack me. Last night, for example, I eliminated a wretch who tried to run me over on the table of the Saints.

AMINTA. — God!

KENNEDY. — After riddling him with bullets I discovered that that man was armed. He could have murdered me with his .38 caliber revolver.

AMINTA. — You! Ardila? Murderer!

KENNEDY. — Do I terrify you? And yet your description of the abortion did not even shake you.

AMINTA. — You invent.

KENNEDY. — Perhaps not. What is the difference? We live a nightmare. Have you ever woken after having killed someone? The relief is fleeting; soon new enemies will appear.

AMINTA. — Someone has to sacrifice himself.

KENNEDY. — Who? Me? Never!

AMINTA. — Tell me that everything you have told me is a lie! Tell me that you are too sensitive to commit a crime! Tell me that you are nothing more than a deserter!

(Exit.)

SCENE 38 - AMINTA, HUMBERTO, LORENA

Humberto and Lorena return. Lorena presents a more contrasted composition. She wears garments of intense color —fuchsia, red or yellow— combined with textiles of artisanal or urban inspiration. The cut is more fitted, marking the silhouette with decision. The hair, styled with greater intention (straightened or gathered high), frames a face of direct expression. The makeup defines the eyes more strongly. Her movements are more precise than those of Fabiola: she stops, observes, intervenes.

HUMBERTO. — Receive one wage from Doña Lorena. No receipt.

(Lorena hands the money to Aminta in cash.)

AMINTA. — (whispering) What is wrong with Kennedy?

HUMBERTO. — Nothing. He wants to emigrate. (To Lorena) He is my son; he thinks little about his future.

(Humberto exits. Thunder and sound of rain.)

SCENE 39 - AMINTA, LORENA

LORENA. — Like everyone. Perhaps you could do business with one of my sons; he is an architect.

AMINTA. — (distracted) What is his name?

LORENA. — Olinto Castro.

AMINTA. — I do not know him.

LORENA. — (uncertain) He studied in Bogotá and works in Cali.

AMINTA. — Modern life forces them to travel from one city to another, does it not?

LORENA. — In whose name should I make out this check?

AMINTA. — To bearer.

LORENA. — Where can I collect my merchandise?

AMINTA. — Humberto will crate it in your

truck.

LORENA. — Do you carry out this type of operation frequently?

AMINTA. — (surprised) Excuse me?

LORENA. — No, excuse me; my husband works in politics, and I am accustomed to embezzlement; there is no comparison, of course, but it is part of our idiosyncrasy; last week he signed a contract for one thousand minimum wages.

AMINTA. — (with envy) A fortune. How much did he obtain?

LORENA. — Ten percent; in legal donations for his next political campaign, of course. He is used to dealing with the investigations that the procurator's office sends us from time to time. You see that the only business worth pursuing is jurisprudence, or the art of enriching oneself from public funds; all my relatives are lawyers.

AMINTA. — I thought your son was an architect.

LORENA. — (blushing) This one is the only exception.

(Lorena hands her check to Aminta. Humberto enters in work clothes.)

Scene 40 - Aminta, Humberto, Lorena

HUMBERTO. — The workers are waiting for you in front of your truck with the glass.

LORENA. — Thank you very much. With your permission.

(Lorena exits. Aminta remains thoughtful.)

Scene 41 - Aminta, Humberto

AMINTA. — What an ostentatious woman.

HUMBERTO. — And Kennedy?

AMINTA. — I think he went to the cafeteria to look for Eliana.

HUMBERTO. — If you see him, remind him that his machine gun is in the vestibule, wrapped in newspaper. I do not want any of the workers to go and do something foolish with it.

(Humberto locks the cupboard.)

AMINTA. — Your son is ill. He meddles too much in our private life.

HUMBERTO. — Perhaps he was flirting with

you. (Laughing) All men desire you.

AMINTA. — I am serious.

HUMBERTO. — I did what I could with Kennedy. I no longer have illusions about his future.

AMINTA. — And his wife, what does she think?

HUMBERTO. — She always supports me. I made her swear that she would not give Kennedy a single cent, even if he tells her he is starving. He is in trouble.

AMINTA. — A mother is always a mother. You are inhuman, making her swear such things.

HUMBERTO. — There are matters of men that you do not understand.

(Aminta approaches Humberto and caresses his face.)

AMINTA. — In that I agree with you. My husband is very grateful to you for the purchase of the truck.

HUMBERTO. — (stepping back) I am glad. Now I must return to work.

(Humberto exits. Aminta makes a gesture to follow him, but encounters Eliana, who also wears black.)

SCENE 42 - AMINTA, ELIANA

ELIANA. — Let him go. One diamond cuts another diamond; I invite you this Saturday to the nightclub "El Templo Pagano". I have a friend from Pasto you will love.

(Eliana sits by the desk and writes a letter.)

AMINTA. — (sobbing) One day he will regret his contempt.

ELIANA. — The funeral was even more emotional than the wake. Where is my mother?

AMINTA. — She went to settle several matters at the farm.

ELIANA. — Is that what she said?

AMINTA. — After the burial.

ELIANA. — I thought she would come to have lunch with me. All the better! I will leave as soon as I finish writing this letter. Of course, you will tell her that I worked the full day.

AMINTA. — I will sign your working hours as usual. (Pause; suddenly) Did you speak with Kennedy?

ELIANA. — No; I have not written to him for some time. He must be busy at his barracks.

AMINTA. — This morning he came looking for you.

ELIANA. — For me?

AMINTA. — It seems he deserted.

ELIANA. — Then I must leave before he finds me.

AMINTA. — He was asking me about your abortion.

ELIANA. — How? You swore to me you would never speak to him about this matter.

AMINTA. — I had no other alternative. I do not know how he found out; someone else must have told him.

ELIANA. — Lies…

AMINTA. — I did not tell him anything he did not already know. Besides, a man who cleans his nails with a dagger intimidates anyone.

ELIANA. — Is he armed?

AMINTA. — To the teeth! He is no longer the same. You know that military service can drive them mad.

(Aminta looks out at the street through the window.)

AMINTA. — See for yourself; I knew he would come.

(Aminta exits. Eliana writes her letter hastily.)

SCENE 43 - ELIANA, KENNEDY

(Kennedy enters and looks at her fixedly.)

ELIANA. — What a surprise! I am glad to see you!

(Eliana moistens the flap of the envelope and seals the letter.)

KENNEDY. — What secrets does my girlfriend keep from me this time?

ELIANA. — Nothing…

KENNEDY. — Nothing?

(Kennedy snatches the letter, opens it and reads it.)

ELIANA. — What are you doing? Give it back to me!

(Eliana tries in vain to recover it.)

KENNEDY. — Darío? "This brief separation tears me apart"?

(Kennedy tears the letter in fury. Eliana recoils.)

ELIANA. — I wanted to tell you in person.

KENNEDY. — You despise me for what I am!

ELIANA. — No!

KENNEDY. — (anguished) It does not surprise me! I have deceived myself: taking your coldness for condescension.

ELIANA. — Two years is too long.

KENNEDY. — I was willing to wait!

ELIANA. — It is easy to wait in a battalion!

KENNEDY. — What do you know about the militia?

ELIANA. — They only give you one day off a week; that way you cannot meet many people; in the United States it is different…

KENNEDY. — In the United States! You disgust me.

ELIANA. — I must go.

KENNEDY. — Shameless!

ELIANA. — Go on. Add that I am a loose woman.

KENNEDY. — Why did you lie to me about your pregnancy? I would have supported you.

ELIANA. — I did not want to hurt you.

KENNEDY. — That child was ours!

ELIANA. — Perhaps not.

KENNEDY. — Perhaps?

ELIANA. — In the tribes of La Guajira each one carries the surname of their mother. It is less complicated, do you not think?

KENNEDY. — You only say that to enrage me.

ELIANA. — Is it not the most convenient for both?

KENNEDY. — I love you, Eliana.

ELIANA. — To what extent? It is impossible to survive without affection.

KENNEDY. — I have not renounced it.

ELIANA. — I know! I was the one who yielded!

KENNEDY. — Yes; I heard that you had married.

ELIANA. — Did you receive my most recent letter?

KENNEDY. — From when?

ELIANA. — I sent it to you last month.

KENNEDY. — No.

ELIANA. — My writing was stripped bare; you will never forgive me.

KENNEDY. — If we are not capable of forgiving those we love, whom else?

ELIANA. — (sweet) Kennedy!

KENNEDY. — I am not a professional, but I am willing to travel with you to Miami; a general has already helped me process my passport.

ELIANA. — Are you not a deserter?

KENNEDY. — It will take them a couple of days to discover me.

(Kennedy takes a handful of bills from the front pocket of his pants.)

KENNEDY. — You see? I already have money to buy my plane ticket. I only lack a place to arrive. What can I do here, in a country where people die or kill? You yourself advised me to avoid violence.

ELIANA. — Do not compromise me. What can you do in the United States?

KENNEDY. — I will work as a construction laborer; it is a matter of life or death.

ELIANA. — You can still remain in Colombia; sooner or later there will be peace.

KENNEDY. — I only get in the way!

(Pause. Eliana touches his back.)

KENNEDY. — Let me go! I do not want your pity! We belong to different castes!

ELIANA. — Kennedy!

KENNEDY. — It is the story of a worker who seduced the daughter of a usurious merchant.

ELIANA. — No one seduced me.

KENNEDY. — Even worse!

ELIANA. — You behave like a spoiled child! We both fell in love with each other! Is it so hard to understand?

KENNEDY. — I was the one who fell in love with your lineage, and you with my misery; your society of hairdressers and bankers bored you, and you sought me, and I opened my doors to you, and you knew me and you abandoned me. I do not blame you; I am sure you did not want to hurt me. I will travel anyway.

ELIANA. — How?

KENNEDY. — Why not? Can you not admit that someone like me emigrates to the United States?

ELIANA. — If that is your decision I will support you.

KENNEDY. — Do not be ashamed.

ELIANA. — What am I saying? Let us forget it, Kennedy! I am a married woman! Do you not understand?

KENNEDY. — You only consider appreciating me now, when you know my departure is imminent.

ELIANA. — Aminta is to blame! She slanders me! You too! She told me you were a deserter! She accused you of having threatened her with a dagger! She hates us. I entrusted her with my pregnancy and Aminta induced me to abort. But now I understand it clearly: we can begin again, Kennedy; your trip to Miami is not a coincidence.

KENNEDY. — But how can I trust someone who has lied to me? One day, when we cross paths in the street, we will avoid each other like strangers.

ELIANA. — You enlisted in the barracks without telling me!

KENNEDY. — My father pressured me! He was not able to buy me my military card.

ELIANA. — I would gladly have given you the

money you needed.

KENNEDY. — Really? (Pause) Let us blame no one, then.

ELIANA. — Now we are free. Free of any commitment.

(Eliana collapses crying on Kennedy's chest. Marino enters with his heavy briefcase.)

SCENE 44 - ELIANA, KENNEDY, MARINO, FABIOLA

MARINO. — Still crying for the deceased? (To Kennedy) We have already stored your collateral in my locker.

(Marino places his briefcase on the desk. FABIOLA follows him: a woman of about 60 years. Fabiola enters with a decisive chromatic presence. She wears a silk blouse in saturated tones —orange, green or turquoise— with wide and fluid patterns. She wears light trousers or a skirt of fabric that responds to movement. Her accessories, visible but controlled, introduce shine without excess: thin bracelets, mobile earrings.
Her hair, loose or gathered with calculated carelessness, retains volume. Her makeup is fresh, with emphasis on the luminosity of the skin. Her movement is free: she does not occupy the space, she crosses it with ease.)

FABIOLA. — (to Eliana) I regret disturbing you. Are you well?

MARINO. — Do not mind the funereal aspect of this office, I beg you. One of our best clients passed away. Please sit down.

(Fabiola sits. Marino approaches Kennedy and hands him an envelope with bills.)

MARINO. — Some men were asking about you in the cafeteria. If I were you, I would already have packed my luggage for Bogotá.

FABIOLA. — What is happening?

MARINO. — Ask him.

(Kennedy exits. Eliana follows him.)

SCENE 45 - FABIOLA, MARINO

FABIOLA. — Is this place safe?

MARINO. — Without that boy, it is. He wanted to extort me. The damned one. But I gave him a bundle of counterfeit bills. I hope they catch him at customs. (Changing tone) So, Daniela and Enriqueta gave you my name. Tell me, what brings you here?

FABIOLA. — (whispering) A supervisor has found several irregularities in the handling of this

company's finances.

MARINO. — What a novelty.

FABIOLA. — The national tax department ordered me to take precautionary measures until the pertinent commission determines the guilt or innocence of this company.

MARINO. — Is that all?

FABIOLA. — The police will appear before this company on Friday, at seven in the morning. The office and the workshop will be sealed with the corresponding stamps. For one or two months the government will take responsibility for all the properties of this company.

MARINO. — I understand. And tell me, what does that have to do with me?

FABIOLA. — We could come on Thursday night to siphon off the most valuable properties; their absence, in case the owner is innocent, will only be discovered in two months; by then the government will be forced to reimburse your company the total cost of the missing properties.

MARINO. — And if the government seizes this company, no one will discover us.

FABIOLA. — Exactly.

MARINO. — Who do you take me for? If in my youth I was an honest man, I am not going to become a

rogue at my age!

FABIOLA. — (surprised, but prepared) If you are not interested, there is no inconvenience.

MARINO. — We shall see what Doña Porcia thinks of all this. Leave before I call the police!

FABIOLA. — Daniela and Enriqueta must have given me the wrong name.

MARINO. — Ah! And why did you not tell me before that you were a friend of such unforgettable people? By no means are we going to quarrel! You will excuse me, but I am cautious. Our boss has been watching us these days. In any case, one thing is to distribute a commission in three equal parts and another to rob a company in the middle of the night with flashlights.

FABIOLA. — My commission will be twenty percent.

SCENE 46 - AMINTA, FABIOLA, MARINO

(Aminta enters.)

MARINO. — (without concealing it) We are not interested; but leave me your phone number, just in case.

FABIOLA. — (glancing sideways at Aminta) Very kind in any case.

(Fabiola writes a number on a piece of paper, which she hands to Marino.)

FABIOLA. — Until soon.

(Fabiola exits. Marino arranges his papers.)

SCENE 47 - AMINTA, MARINO

AMINTA. — New business, Don Marino?

MARINO. — Nothing of interest.

AMINTA. — I heard something about a certain commission.

(Marino smiles.)

MARINO. — I dismissed an inconvenient lady with gallantry.

AMINTA. — My myopia has increased lately. I wonder if it was you whom I saw this morning embracing Doña Porcia.

MARINO. — Ah! You are not mistaken. Porcia has taken a liking to me.

AMINTA. — A widow takes a liking to anyone.

MARINO. — I am an unfaithfully married man, but prudent. An affair with my superior would not

benefit me at all.

AMINTA. — And your capital?

MARINO. — I prefer to work as her administrator.

AMINTA. — You want to control her.

MARINO. — A romantic quarrel would suffice for Porcia to dismiss me, which would be regrettable. You are the only woman who interests me, Aminta.

AMINTA. — Forget it.

MARINO. — Humberto does not love you. Do you know that he now goes about as a preacher? Condemning adulterers, as if he himself were a paragon of virtues.

AMINTA. — What do you mean?

MARINO. — In any case, the embezzlement, which is your common interest, will end very soon.

AMINTA. — How?

MARINO. — In love, as in war, anything goes, Aminta.

AMINTA. — You?

MARINO. — Doña Porcia will dismiss you, your husband will lose his new truck and he will return to his

bad habits. You, of course, may count from now on on my assistance; I have an apartment that I bought a month ago in the suburbs of the city; here is the address.

(Marino hands her a piece of paper with a written address. Aminta takes it with a trembling hand.)

AMINTA. — What you want is to take advantage of my helplessness! (Between jest and tears)

MARINO. — You associate me with your helplessness like a wrinkle with old age. A prostitute once told me that at forty she was segregated, that no one wanted to know her anymore. I told her that, on the contrary, I would be interested in loving her. The wretch then despised me, alleging that I was too young. (Marino laughs) But age is not the greatest obstacle in love. Think of the efforts of models, who judge men by their brand-name suits.

AMINTA. — You speak like a heartless man.

MARINO
We both lack a soul, Aminta.
He speaks who sees without fear nor pity,
as if the soul were only darkness,
when embezzlement is of consent.

No single being suffers; its ardor spreads
through every home that hunger leaves in ruin.
Each pain that crosses over the hill
is the fault of a nation that sells itself.

Sleeping children pass along the platform,

and the heart does not weep, it only looks.
We fall silent by habit or by lie,
usurers of the soul and of meaning.

The same weeping sounds in a thousand throats,
and we bargain with their suffering.
We choose the wolf, the feigned disguise,
the despot who delights us clothed in red.

The liar, the false progressive,
thugs who venerate the tyrant.
Their law is the mob, their faithful brother,
and their dominion, communist anguish.

Vile perversity has marked us:
a divine punishment that keeps refining us.
And in this dark and wounding cycle,
Colombia sees its spirit broken.

Victims and executioners, the same wake,
and from their ruins the star will bloom.
Perhaps one day, when Christ returns,
we shall be springtime for the world.

Scene 48 - Aminta, Lorena, Marino, Porcia

(Porcia enters accompanied by Lorena.)

PORCIA. — Call Humberto for me, Aminta, please.

(Aminta turns pale and collapses onto her chair. Marino rises promptly.)

MARINO. — I will do it.

(Marino exits.)

Scene 49 - Aminta, Lorena, Porcia

AMINTA. — (to Lorena, awkwardly) Doctor, do you need anything?

PORCIA. — The farce is over, Aminta. Allow me to introduce you to Attorney Porras; although I believe you already met this afternoon.

AMINTA. — Under different circumstances.

PORCIA. — And you still have the spirit to joke?

(A distant gunshot is heard from the street. Marino enters.)

Scene 50

Aminta, Humberto, Lorena, Marino, Porcia

MARINO. — Here he is!

(Humberto enters and turns pale upon seeing Lorena.)

PORCIA. — (ignoring the gunshot) I was reviewing the tempered glass and I noticed that one piece measuring three meters by one and a half was missing. Tell us where it is, Humberto.

HUMBERTO. — It broke in two. It was an accident.

(Aminta weeps inconsolably, covering her mouth with her hands.)

AMINTA. — It is not necessary that you humiliate us in that way.

(Marino exits smiling.)

SCENE 51 - AMINTA, HUMBERTO, LORENA, PORCIA

PORCIA. — (ignoring Aminta's last words; to Humberto) An accident that you must pay for from your salary. You are a resourceful man, Humberto; show us the broken pieces.

AMINTA. — (to Humberto, whispering) Marino betrayed us. (To Porcia) You are blind if you do not see

the shameless way in which Marino is ruining you!

HUMBERTO. — Aminta!

AMINTA. — I unmasked him before you dismiss me! Even if it is the last thing I do in this life!

PORCIA. — (to Humberto) Bring the pieces!

(Humberto exits, flushed and thoughtful.)

SCENE 52 - AMINTA, LORENA, PORCIA

LORENA. — (to Aminta) If you cooperate we will refrain from filing criminal charges.

PORCIA. — Avoid going to prison.

AMINTA. — We have committed no crime. I know the law, and you have no proof other than your testimony.

LORENA. — It is always the same. Do you want me to accompany you to file the complaint?

AMINTA. — What I tell you about Don Marino is true! He denounced me so that you would leave me at his mercy.

PORCIA. — Very well. But let it be a civil complaint.

AMINTA. — You protect him!

PORCIA. — I want you to sign your letter of resignation today.

AMINTA. — Excellent! In that case I will speak with Eliana before she travels to the United States.

PORCIA. — (alarmed) Are you threatening me?

AMINTA. — I only want you to reconsider your position.

LORENA. — Your employee's husband recently acquired a truck. Tomorrow we will proceed to seize it.

AMINTA. — The truck is in my brother-in-law's name.

LORENA. — Will you sign the letter of resignation, or do you prefer that we take you to court for breach of trust?

PORCIA. — It will not be necessary.

LORENA. — What?

PORCIA. — But you cannot continue here, Aminta.

AMINTA. — I will leave, provided that you settle me with twenty minimum wages.

(Pause.)

LORENA. — This is outrageous!

PORCIA. — What will I obtain in return?

AMINTA. — Whatever you desire.

PORCIA. — I am sure you will testify against Humberto.

(Pause. Aminta sobs.)

AMINTA. — There will be no inconvenience.

SCENE 53 - AMINTA, ELIANA, HUMBERTO, LORENA, PORCIA

(Eliana enters; her voice is an intermittent moan.)

PORCIA. — Eliana! Are you ill, daughter?

AMINTA. — What is happening?

SCENE 54 - AMINTA, ELIANA, HUMBERTO, LORENA, MARINO, PORCIA

Marino enters with a severe expression.)

MARINO. — Right in front of the cafeteria!

ELIANA. — In the middle of the street, in broad daylight!

LORENA. — The gunshot?

PORCIA. — But, of whom?

(Humberto enters with a piece of broken glass.)

ELIANA. — I wanted to answer him, but when I saw him, as I lifted my head, a young man aimed at us, and… and Kennedy could not escape!

(The piece of glass slips from Humberto's hands and shatters against the tile. Everyone recoils, leaving Humberto at the center of the stage.)

HUMBERTO. — (bursting into tears) But it was nothing more than a scrap piece…

(The lights go out.)

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